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ABSTRACT

The guide offers parents of young children with learning disabilities a curriculum to remediate behavior problems and social skill deficits. The curriculum focuses on eight social skill problems identified as common by a preliminary needs assessment. Part I provides an introduction to the curriculum with chapters on using the curriculum with your child, observing and measuring behavior, and principles of teaching and managing behavior. The principles cover teaching behaviors with antecedents, teaching behavior with consequences, and teaching new behaviors--shaping, using token reinforcers, and using consequences to decrease undesirable behavior. Part II provides specific teaching strategies (usually 5 to 10 per area considered) for modifying the following eight problem behavior areas: (1) talking over differences without getting angry, (2) understanding the rules, (3) continuing to try when frustrated, (4) getting ready on time, (5) refusing requests politely, (6) following directions, (7) waiting patiently, and (8) taking turns talking. (DB)

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TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS TO YOUNG CHILDREN:

A PARENT'S GUIDE

Sheri Searcy
Editor

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Handicaps

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PREFACE

In 1986, Interstate Research Associates received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop and evaluate strategies for families of children with learning disabilities to use to cope with their children's behavior problems and social skill deficits. This curriculum for parents of young children is one of the products of that grant. Two additional curriculum modules are available for school-age and transition-to-work age youth.

The materials were developed in response to the needs identified by a representative sample of parents of children with learning disabilities. The selected parents completed a Learning Disabilities Needs Assessment Checklist in the spring of 1987. The checklist was designed to identify the social skills and behavior problem areas of children with learning disabilities as perceived by their parents, and to determine parents' training needs. Parents were asked to respond to three areas of concern: (1) the child's skill levels in various social skill areas, such as giving compliments, listening to others, following directions, and sharing belongings; (2) the severity of the child's negative behaviors, such as criticizing and making negative comments, refusing to talk, arguing with other children, demanding attention, and stealing; and (3) the child's behavior in potential problem situations, such as going to the doctor, riding in the car, doing homework, and interacting with brothers and sisters.

When the results of the Needs Assessment Checklist were analyzed, it was found that, for the early childhood population, there were eight social skill problems that affected over 50% of the parents surveyed. The analysis also revealed that these problems existed in a wide range of everyday situations and that there was a close relationship between the most commonly occurring social skill deficits and the most commonly occurring behavior problems. Based on these results, the overall goal in this curriculum is to provide parents with a guide for teaching their young learning-disabled children needed social skills and for addressing related behavior problems in the context of their normal home life.

The development of the curriculum was guided by several assumptions:

- *An understanding of normal child development is necessary for realistic goals.* This information should convey two points: (a) parents can work on changing their child's behavior no matter what their child's skill level is; and (b) parents may need to adjust their "teaching approach" to meet the child's level of development.

- *The curriculum should be self-instructional.* By need or preference, some parents want to learn and apply strategies for teaching social skills on their own.

- *Teaching should be accompanied by objective measurement of progress.* Parents need "hands-on" methods for recording their child's behaviors and measuring their progress.

- *The strategies should be based on behavioral, cognitive, and social learning principles.* Principles of behavioral psychology state that people learn to behave in certain ways according to the consequences they receive for their behaviors. Principles of cognitive psychology state that people can be taught the reasons why positive (good) behavior is important, can learn the rules that govern social behavior, and can practice the appropriate behaviors. Principles of social learning theory are based on people observing and imitating the behaviors demonstrated or modeled by someone with whom they can identify. Each of these approaches offers a necessary component to teaching and managing behavior.

- *The strategies can and should be explained in concrete and simple language.* Parents want clear, simple, down-to-earth directions for teaching their children social skills. Although an understanding of theories of human learning may help parents teach their children, unnecessary jargon should be avoided.

- *The strategies should address the management of related problem behaviors.* The strategies presented should not only teach appropriate behaviors, but also help parents decrease or eliminate their child's negative behaviors that occur in place of or related to the desired behavior.

- *The strategies can be taught within the family's daily routine.* Parents can structure "practice sessions" for the child within their day-to-day activities.

- *The training program should provide activities that parents can use to apply and reinforce the teaching strategies.* These activities should give parents assistance in making use of the strategies in the home.

Eight families in the greater Washington D.C. area field-tested the curriculum over a period of five months. They reported an increased ability to cope with their children's behaviors and positive behavior changes on the part of their children. The experiences of these families suggest that this curriculum can be easily utilized by parents and will provide them with a rewarding approach to teaching their child social skills.

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Part I

Introduction To Curriculum Use

Chapter 1

Using The Curriculum With Your Child

CHAPTER 1

USING THE CURRICULUM WITH YOUR CHILD

Good social skills are important to everyone. They enable us to get along with others, form friendships, hold jobs, and work with others toward mutual goals. These are the skills that help us act with others in a way that is socially acceptable and that benefits ourselves and others, without harming anyone else.

There are many behaviors that can be called social skills. Following the rules of conversation, responding to social cues, and being able to change as a result of people's reactions are a few of the important social skills. Others include making eye contact, smiling, saying "hello" and "goodbye," being polite, cooperating by taking turns, responding appropriately to questions, being sensitive to the feelings of others, helping others, having interesting things to say, reinforcing and acknowledging others' comments, and controlling aggression and other inappropriate behavior.

As adults, we have learned how to use our verbal and non-verbal behaviors to get positive responses from others and to obtain pleasure from our interactions. Children, as well, learn and use social skills with a variety of people, including parents, teachers, and peers. But not all children are able to do this, and children with learning disabilities may find social skills particularly difficult. Often, because of their disabilities, these children have difficulties in identifying what behaviors they need in order for others to accept them. They often have trouble understanding the rules of conversation and adopting someone else's point of view. In addition, they might find it difficult to recognize meaning in others' behaviors. These problems may affect all the interactions these children have, and are thought to be related to difficulties in understanding nonverbal communication, knowing how and when to use certain social skills, and having the motivation and self–control to use these skills appropriately.

Purpose and Emphasis

We have designed these materials to provide parents with the basic strategies for (1) teaching needed social skills to their young children with learning disabilities and (2) managing problem behaviors related to deficits in social skills. The teaching techniques are specifically aimed at children from about 4 to 7 years of age who have social problems.

This curriculum is designed to provide both a basic guide to behavior change and a specific program for teaching certain skills. The three chapters in the first unit serve as a reference section to which you can refer as necessary. Chapter 1 explains the use of the curriculum, followed by a discussion in Chapter 2 of measuring behavior. Chapter 3 contains an overview of teaching and managing behavior, developed by the Shriver University Affiliated Program in Massachusetts. The eight chapters in the last unit are designed to serve as a daily guide to teaching eight specific behaviors that affect most young children with learning disabilities. As we have defined them, these behaviors are:

- Talking over differences without getting angry — Explaining your point of view without getting angry in a way that shuts off communication. With young children this means saying what you want or don't want without having temper tantrums, hitting, yelling, or storming off.

- Taking turns talking — Engaging in the give-and-take of communication. This includes waiting until the other person comes to a break before starting to talk, and giving others a chance to talk.

- Understanding the rules — Demonstrating an awareness of rules governing games, as well as an awareness that there are rules that govern behaviors in other settings.

- Persisting when faced with frustration — Continuing to try when things are difficult.

- Getting ready on time — Doing all the tasks that are necessary to prepare for an event on someone else's time schedule.

- Refusing requests politely — Saying "no" in such a way that the other person understands that there is a reason for the refusal and is not offended. A young child must be taught to express refusal politely instead of throwing a temper tantrum or being rude.

- Following directions — Comprehending instructions, remembering what you are to do, and doing what you are asked to do.

- Waiting when necessary — Passing time constructively while waiting for some event to occur. This means not burdening others with constant questions or anxious behaviors, and not going ahead when you've been asked to wait.

Getting Started

OBSERVE YOUR CHILD IN MANY SITUATIONS WITH A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT PEOPLE. Consider whether your child has difficulty with any or all of the behaviors listed on page 2. We all act differently under different conditions, and your child may behave in certain settings or with certain people much more appropriately than you realize. Is the problem the same in all settings and with all people? This will give you information to use in planning which behaviors to work on. It will tell you whether your child is capable of performing the desired behavior, the circumstances under which your child performs best, and what most motivates your child to do his or her best.

WORK ON ONLY ONE BEHAVIOR AT A TIME. You don't want to overload your child with too many new demands. Choose one behavior to start working on. Remember, behaviors change slowly. Think about all the behaviors: Which one is the biggest problem for your child? Which affects you or your family the most? Which will have the biggest impact on others away from home? Which seems the easiest to change?

BEFORE YOU START, DETERMINE EXACTLY WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING NOW, AND WHAT YOUR GOAL WILL BE. As you read Chapters 2 and 3, think about your goal for your child. In Chapter 2, you will determine a measurement technique to use to help you determine when your child meets your goal. When your evaluations show you that your child has improved significantly, you can choose another behavior to work on.

THE STRATEGIES IN EACH CHAPTER ARE PRESENTED IN A SEQUENCE TO ALLOW YOU TO BUILD ON EACH TECHNIQUE YOU'VE ALREADY MASTERED. We believe in starting with the techniques that are easiest to implement before you try the more elaborate ones, and we have tried to order them with that in mind. We suggest that you begin with the first technique and add each successive technique as you can. Not all of the strategies in one chapter should be attempted at one time, however. It's much more important to very consciously use one strategy until it becomes an easy thing to do, and you observe that it is helping your child. It's not possible to predict exactly how long this will take. For some parents, one new strategy may be begun every day or two. For others, the child may be helped more by concentrating on a particular strategy for a week or more. The rate of progress will depend on the child and on you. You must be the judge of how fast to proceed. Chapter 2 on measurement will help guide you.

The teaching strategies are designed to approach problems in different ways. We suggest that you try each of the strategies, but if one is uncomfortable for you or seems inappropriate for your child, you may not have to use each one in order to see some change in your child's behavior.

YOU CAN EASILY BUILD THE STRATEGIES INTO YOUR NORMAL ROUTINES. Your presentation does not need to be a "sit-down" lesson, unless that is the best way for you to get your child's attention for parts of the lesson. As much as possible, we've tried to present strategies that you can use with your child as you are fixing dinner, talking at the dinner table, or riding in the car. For each strategy, you will find several examples to use in your family

routines. In addition, each chapter has several activities for you to complete that will help you begin to apply the techniques.

Remember that, as a parent, you already are the best "teacher" your child has. All the positive things you do for and with your child help him or her to grow and learn more effectively. Some children, however, present more challenges even to the best of parents, and "teaching" them the skills they need requires more work—and more information. In Chapter 2, you'll learn some concrete methods for observing and measuring your child's behavior that will help you decide what you want to work on with your child.

Chapter 2

Observing And Measuring Behavior

CHAPTER 2

OBSERVING AND MEASURING BEHAVIOR

We are all people-watchers. That's one important way that we learn. Parents can learn a lot by stepping back and observing their children for specific reasons. Watching our children can make us aware of new skills we didn't notice developing before. It can show us how our children react to different situations, and it can show us how the world reacts to our child's behaviors. Consider what Cameron's and Lucy's parents learn in the following examples.

> Cameron was allowed to bring his toy box downstairs to play when Daddy got home from work. Although this was supposed to be a fun time for him and Dad, it usually ended in a temper tantrum before Cameron ever came back downstairs. Several days of careful observation showed Dad that Cameron became very frustrated when he tried to carry the box of toys downstairs. Cameron had poor motor coordination, and when he couldn't see his feet as he came down the stairs, he stumbled or fell. All of this added up to frustration and tantrums.

> Some days Lucy would do her homework without argument. Other times, she would whine, moan, or just refuse. Her mother was surprised to learn that her "good" homework days were when she was assigned mathematics.

When we go to some effort to teach our children a particular skill, we also observe our children to see whether it has been learned, whether the child uses the skill, and whether it helps the child. These are important pieces of information we need for making decisions about our children.

There are several reasons why it is usually helpful to keep a record of the child's behavior. The primary reason is so that we can look back over time and see how far the child has come. It draws our attention to whether the child's behavior is improving, getting worse, or not changing at all. Memories fade and are sometimes colored by present situations. Recognizing this can be especially important at times when we feel discouraged by our child's behavior. We have something to compare against the child's present behavior. This can confirm the need to take a new action or to continue with a strategy that is showing some slow but steady progress.

Ways To Record Behavior

There are a number of ways to record or keep track of observations. In this chapter, we will discuss four different recording methods: frequency, duration, interval, and anecdotal. The following section is taken from the book *Behavior Problems* (Baker, Brightman, Heifetz, and Murphy, 1976). This book was written to help parents manage problem behaviors, and the measurement techniques apply equally to measuring behaviors that you wish to increase. Following this excerpt, we will describe the use of interval measurement and anecdotal recording. Examples of the use of recording forms are included, and blank forms are provided in the Appendix for your use.

Counting And Timing Behaviors
(from *Behavior Problems*)

In many cases, keeping track simply means counting *how many times* the behavior happens or, in other words, its *frequency* of occurrence. For example:

Mark had two temper tantrums (screams, kicks, bites his hand) today.

Larry tears his clothes an average of 7 times a day.

Bobby hit another child 11 times during recess.

In other cases, keeping track requires clocking *how long* the behavior continues each time it occurs—its *duration*. For example:

Polly takes an average of 90 minutes to dress in the morning.

Jill played with the puzzle for 45 seconds before wandering off.

Jackie continued to cry for 25 minutes after being put to bed.

Gary jumps up from the dinner table on an average of every 5 minutes.

You will record either the *frequency* (how many times it occurs) or the *duration* (how long it lasts) of the behavior problem. In our case example, Gary's parents recorded the duration of time he stayed at the table before getting up the first time.

To decide whether you should count the frequency or clock the duration of a behavior problem, ask the following question: "Will counting *how many* show me if I'm reaching my goal?"

Counting "how many times" Polly gets dressed in the morning certainly will not provide that information because the goal in this case is to reduce the *length of time* it takes her to dress. On

the other hand, counting how many times Mark has a tantrum (screams, bites hand) each day would answer the question because the goal is to decrease the *number* of tantrums.

Think about the following behavior problems and decide whether counting "how many" or "timing how long" would be best.

Joan kicks the cat.
Tim cries every night before going to sleep.
Charlie does his chores slowly.
Rosalie keeps opening the refrigerator.
Sally throws food.
John rocks back and forth.

These are not easy at first. If you decided to *count how many* for the girls and *time how long* for the boys, you score 100%.

Joan kicks the cat.

Count how many. The goal is for Joan to kick the cat fewer times or not at all.

Tim cries every night before going to sleep.

Time how long. Counting the number of nights Tim cries will not give enough information; we already know that he cries every night. You want to reduce the length of crying time.

Charlie does his chores slowly.

Time how long. Charlie already does his chores, but the goal is for him to do them faster.

Rosalie keeps opening the refrigerator.

Count how many. It doesn't matter if it takes Rosalie 2 seconds or 2 hours to open the refrigerator. The goal is to decrease the number of times she does it.

Sally throws food.

Count how many. Again, we want reduce the number of times Sally throws food; how long it takes her to do it is unimportant.

John rocks back and forth.

Time how long. To count the number of times John rocks, even for a short period, would require too much effort. A duration measure of how long he rocks is better.

Your first record-keeping will be a *before measure*—recording your child's behavior for one week before you begin a specific program to change it.

We've all seen ads in the back of magazines for miraculous new exercise programs guaranteed to give anyone a perfect figure or physique. In order to convince you to sign up for their program, they show a *before* and *after* picture. The *before* might be a 300-pound woman, compared to the same woman after at 110 pounds. The numbers and pictures are there as proof that the exercise program really works.

This is exactly what we are asking you to do with your child—to get a *before* and an *after* picture of his behavior in order to judge whether your approach has been successful, or whether the program should be changed.

In our account of Gary's behavior problem, his family kept a *before* record for one week; at every meal they wrote down how long Gary remained seated after everyone sat down. During this week they did not change their usual way of reacting to Gary. This record-keeping was easy, it required very little extra effort from the family, and it gave them a good record of his behavior problem. ...At the end of the first week their chart for dinner looked like this:

Time in Minutes

Dinner	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Average
	3	2	5	7	3	4	4	4

When you begin to take your before measure, you might find that it is difficult to decide at times whether the problem has occurred. It may be that you will still have to define the problem more specifically.

If more than one member of the family is helping with record-keeping, you should talk about what you each consider to be the problem. Remember, you will be measuring either frequency (how many) or duration (how long). Gary's family measured duration.

Will counting "how many" show me if I'm reaching my goal?

"Yes" -Count how many
"No" -Time how long

The following is an example of specifying a behavior and taking a *Before Measure*—in this case, frequency.

> Here we go again! Betty was in tears, the castle she had so carefully built was in shambles, and John was "in trouble," about to get his usual scolding. But first, Mrs. O'Neil put another check on the chart. She was taking a before measure of John's problem behavior, which she had once called "not playing nicely." After thinking about his behavior more exactly, she had re-named the problem "interfering with toys while Betty is using them." During the *before week* she had been instructed to respond to John's "interference" as she always had, with one exception: She was to note on a chart each time this behavior occurred and then she could get on with the usual scolding. Yesterday the total on the chart was only one, but today it was already three.

In this example, Mrs. O'Neil recorded *every time* John interfered with Betty's play. It was easy to count because it happened infrequently, about 3 times a day. Therefore, it was possible to record *every time* the problem occurred. With infrequent behaviors, whether you are recording *how many* or *how long*, you should record every time the behavior occurs.

Other relatively distinctive and infrequent behavior problems for which you could obtain a complete record over the entire day might include any of the following:

running away
violent outbursts of temper
breaking furniture
tearing clothes
fighting
hitting someone
screaming

Many behavior problems occur so frequently, however, that you could not get a complete day's record: You would have to follow your child all day to record the problem, and would have little time to do anything else. For these more frequent problems, you will only record at specific times during the day.

Some problems occur only at a particular time or in a specific situation, for example, at mealtime, or at bedtime, or during a bath. For these, the observation time is pretty obvious. For other problems, which occur at a variety of times during the day, you will need to decide on a specific observation time (or times). Use the following guidelines:

1. Select a time (usually 15 to 30 minutes is long enough) when the behavior is most likely to occur, and keep track of the behavior when it occurs during this period.

2. As closely as possible, observe during the same time period (or periods) each day.

You might choose to observe for several 20-minute intervals, or for the first 5 minutes of every hour, or for the hour immediately following dinner, or whatever. The exact time is up to you, as long as it is a time when the behavior is likely to occur, a time which is convenient for you, and as close as possible to the same time each day. The main point is to be consistent in your measuring; make sure that you measure only for the specified times.

When is a behavior frequent enough to record only at certain times?

A rough guideline is: If the behavior occurs more often than once in 15 minutes, record only at specified times. If it occurs less frequently, record every time it occurs throughout the day.

EXAMPLE

Bobby would very frequently hit, or push, or kick his brothers. Now Bobby's teacher has begun to report this same behavior toward other children at school. It clearly seemed time for the family to do something about it. They decided that a good time to observe would be from 6:00 to 6:30 in the evening, just after dinner and when the boys were usually engaged in play. During this 30 minutes Dad recorded–by putting an X on a chart–every time Bobby hit, kicked or pushed one of his brothers. At the end of the 30 minutes Dad totaled the Xs. Below is his record for a two-week *before* period.

Before

Week Write in Date	Days S	M	T	W	T	F	S	Average for Week
Week 1 3/21 - 3/27	4	8	6	4	3	Not here	5	5
Week 2 3/28 - 4/3	7	4	6	5	7	3	8	6
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								

On the first day Bobby hit, kicked, or pushed 4 times, on the next day 8 times, and so forth. His dad figured an average for each week — but we'll talk more about that later.

Record-Keeping Summary

What to observe:

1. Select a behavior problem.

2. Specify the behavior exactly, so that the members of your family can agree about whether the behavior has occurred or not.

Write the problem behavior here:_____

_____

How to observe:

1. Decide whether to count how many or time how long (or both).

   Ask the question: Will counting "how many" show me if I'm reaching my goal?

Write whether you will measure how many or how long here: _____

When to observe:

1. If the behavior is infrequent, observe all day.

2. If the behavior is frequent, or occurs only in a certain situation, observe for a shorter time period.

Write whether you will observe all day or for a shorter time period here:

_____

If a specific time period, when will it be? _____

Interval Recording

A technique similar to counting the number of behaviors is interval recording. An interval measure is a record of whether or not a behavior occurred during certain time frames. At times,

this technique may be simpler to use than frequency recording. Form 4 is provided in the Appendix for your use in interval recording.

To make an interval record, you set out blocks of time, and then observe to see whether or not the behavior occurs in each block of time. For instance, if dinner usually lasts a half hour you could divide it into six 5-minute blocks. In the observation period recorded below, Eric got out of his seat at least once during the first 5 minutes of dinner, and again during the third interval. He stayed in his chair at all other times.

Form 4
Interval Observation Record

Behavior: Eric gets out of his seat at mealtime
Observed By: Dad

Time			Occurrence of behavior Each block (interval) stands for 5 minute(s)												
Date	Begins	Ends													
3/4/86	6:00	6:30p	+	O	+	O	O	O							

+ = got out of seat O = did not get out of seat

ACTIVITY

Watch your child carefully during the next 5 minutes. Use the following form to record the occurrence of saying something pleasant. In each 1-minute period of time, mark a plus (+) if the child said something nice to anyone and a minus (-) if he did not. Do this for 5 minutes.

Minute	1	2	3	4	5

+ = Child said something pleasant

- = Child did not say anything pleasant

Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records are written descriptions of behaviors. As you observe the child, you write down everything that happens in as much detail as possible. Try to separate what you actually see and hear from what you think people are feeling. The following is an anecdotal record of a child's behavior after school.

Form 5
Anecdotal Record

Date: Mon. Sept. 30, 1986
Day of Week / Date

Time: 3:25 - 3:40 p.m.
Begin / End

Observed By: Mother

Behavior description: (include who was present, what activities were occurring as you began to watch, and what was said and done).

Joanne came in and immediately turned on the T.V. When I said "hi," she said "hi" back without looking up. She sat down on the floor and looked at the T.V. screen for 10 minutes without looking away. A commerical came on and she looked at me and said "I want a cookie." I told her she could have a banana. She frowned and walked to the kitchen. I heard the cookie jar lid come off.

In this example, the parent noted the observation time and place, and then began to write everything that happened. The parent described what the child did, as well as the events that occurred before and after the child's actions. You can use Form 5 in the Appendix to help you make an anecdotal record.

One variation of this measurement technique is to keep a diary. Rather than record behavior as it occurs, the parent will describe the child's behavior at the end of the day. The diary may lose some effectiveness because it relies on your memory and because the child's later behavior may have influenced the way you remember the events.

However, it may be useful when other methods are not possible. The anecdotal method may be used for any behavior. It is particularly useful when you are trying to figure out what things influence your child's behavior. Before you begin a program to change a child's behavior, or when you don't feel that your current strategies are working for your child, an anecdotal record might help you identify the factors that are working for or against you.

Ways To Make Recording Easier

Through years of experience in measuring children's behaviors, people have developed some innovative ways to record conveniently. Your convenience is very important, because you want to give your attention to using the teaching strategies that help your child. Any system you can make up to help you easily record behavior is worth a try. Here are some that we have tried or heard about.

Pennies in your pocket. You will need to wear clothing (or an apron or carpenter's belt) with two pockets. At first you will need to estimate how many pennies you could need. Start with two times more pennies than the number of behaviors you estimate will be observed. Other things about the same size (like paper clips, lima beans, or checkers) could work just as well as pennies. To start, put all the pennies in your right pocket. When you observe the child doing the behavior that you are counting, move one penny from the right pocket to the left pocket. At the end of the observation period, count the number of pennies in your left pocket. Record this number on Form 1 or Form 2.

Adhesive tape on the refrigerator door. You will need adhesive tape cut into small strips. Make sure you have more than enough strips prepared. To start, line up the strips on the right side of the refrigerator door. When you observe the child performing the behavior, move one strip of tape from the right side of the refrigerator door to the left side. At the end of the observation period, count the number of strips on the left side, and record this number on Form 1 or Form 2.

Rubber bands on your wrists. You will need a sufficient number of rubber bands large enough to fit comfortably on your wrists. Start with the rubber bands on your right wrist, and move one to the left wrist each time you see the behavior. At the end of the observation period, count the number of bands on your left wrist. Write this number on Form 1 or Form 2.

Grocery store counter or golf counter. These may be purchased at dime stores or sport stores. Each time you observe the child doing the behavior, you simply push the button on the counter. At the end of the observation period, record your count on Form 1 or Form 2.

Cooking timer. You can use an ordinary kitchen timer to help measure the duration of a behavior. You can turn the timer on to 60 minutes when the child begins the behavior, and note the minutes elapsed when the behavior ends. Write this on Form 3.

Stopwatch. A stopwatch makes duration recording very easy. Some wrist watches now have stopwatch features. You push the button when the behavior begins and again when it ends. Record the minutes or seconds on Form 3.

Paper clips. Keep a number of paper clips in your pocket. When the child performs the behavior, remove a paper clip from your pocket, and place it on your belt or waist band. At the end of the time period, count the paper clips on your belt and record this number on Form 1 or Form 2. Continue this through the same time period each day.

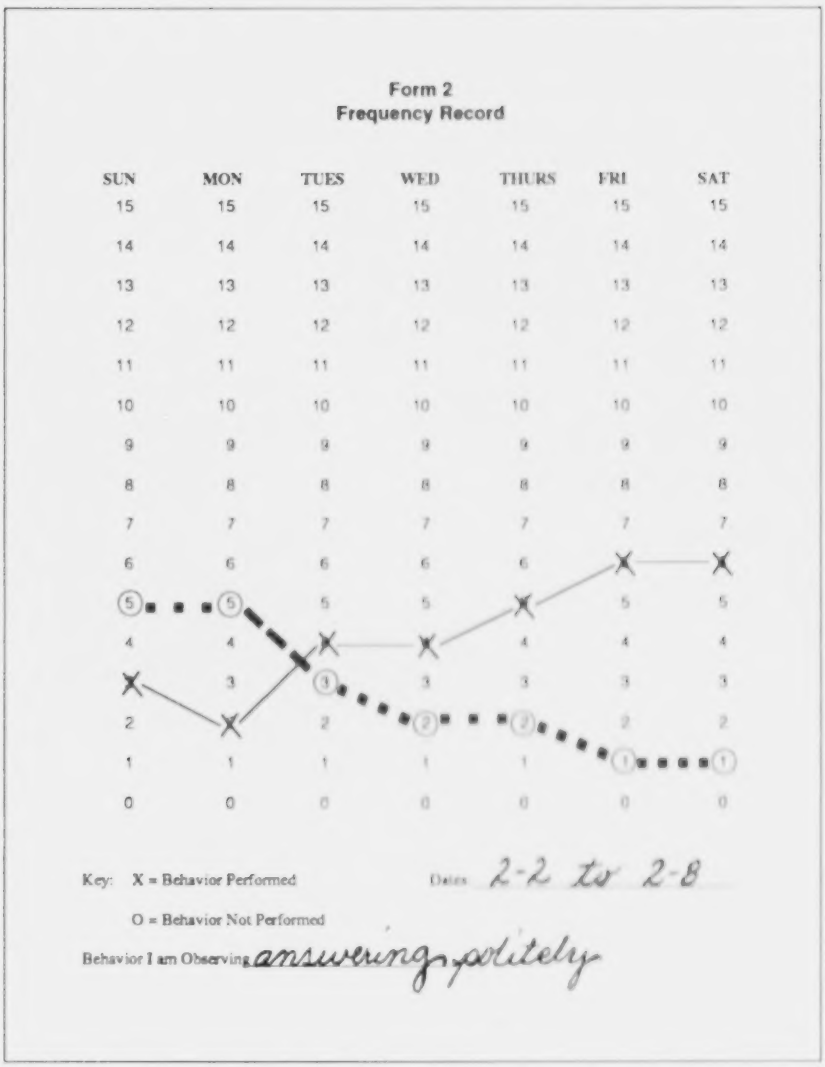
ACTIVITY

Try counting how many times your child says "Thank you" in the next half hour. Put thirty pennies or (paper clips, or toothpicks) in your right pocket. Note the time on a scrap of paper. Each time your child says "Thank you," take one penny from your right pocket and put it into the left pocket. At the end of the half-hour, count how many pennies have moved to the left pocket. Record this on Form 2 in the Appendix.

Charting Behaviors

You can make your record of your child's behavior work to its fullest by making a chart or graph of the behavior. After you record the behavior in one of the manners outlined above, those numbers can be placed on the chart or graph. This will allow you to see at a glance whether the child is making progress with the skill you are teaching.

The most common method of graphing your observations is to convert your observation record into a line graph. To do this, transfer your count of behaviors onto the graph each day. In the example that follows, Becky was observed for one hour each day. She answered her mother politely 3 times the first day, 2 times on the second day, 4 times on the third and fourth days, and so on. The graph also shows the number of times Becky did not answer politely: 5 times on the first day, 5 times on the second day, 3 times on the third day, 2 times on the fourth day, etc. Over the period graphed, we can see that, in general, the number of polite answers is increasing while the number of impolite answers is decreasing.



Making Decisions About Behavior

The purpose of collecting information from observations of your child is to help make decisions. If you see that the child is learning the skill, you may decide:

1) That the skill is learned to a degree that it should no longer warrant special attention. In this case, you may divert your attention to teaching a different skill.

2) That the skill is improving from the use of a strategy, and that another strategy should be added to enhance the child's use of the skill.

3) That no change should be made. The current strategies are paying off.

4) That the child is ready to learn to use the skill in a more complex way. For instance, if you are successful at teaching your child to follow simple rules, you will want to gradually introduce the exceptions. In softball, you hit the ball and run—unless it's a foul ball.

5) That you wish to teach the child to use this skill with new people or in other settings such as church or day-care.

6) That the child is ready to perform the skill with less help from you. If you have been giving the child cues for using the behavior, you may try to "fade out" the cues.

7) That you can change to a more natural reinforcer. As you will read in Chapter 3, you may need to reward your child in different ways at different times. But you will always be moving toward rewarding him in the most natural way possible.

If the child's behavior is not improving in the way you want:

1) You may need to change reinforcers. The child's motivation may be low. Check pages 25-26 for help in finding more meaningful reinforcers for your child.

2) Evaluate the language that you are using with the child. Is it too complex for the child to understand? Can you simplify the words or ideas?

3) Check to see if the behavior can be broken into simpler steps.

Now that you have additional information about those of your child's behaviors which you want to change and the skills you want to teach, go on to Chapter 3. This chapter will help you to understand more about why children behave as they do, how they learn certain behaviors, and how you can effectively teach and manage new behaviors.

Chapter 3

Principles Of Teaching And Managing Behavior

CHAPTER 3

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND MANAGING BEHAVIOR

by

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Whether trying to teach new social skills or manage related behavior problems, a number of basic behavioral principles apply. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how these principles apply to the everyday behavior of children and their parents.

Our approach is based on two underlying assumptions. The first assumption is that *whenever two people interact they change each other's behavior*. For example, when you ask your daughter to hang up her coat, it's easy to see that you intend to change her behavior. What might not be as obvious, however, is that what she does will change your behavior, as well. Your behavior if she hangs up her coat (you may react by praising her) would be very different than if she throws the coat at you (in which case you might at least repeat the command).

The second assumption is that *both desirable and undesirable behaviors are learned and can be taught*. Once again, it's not too difficult to believe that we teach children to be polite, clean their rooms, do their homework, and most of the "good" things they learn growing up. It's hard to imagine that we unintentionally may teach them behaviors like whining and arguing. But consider the familiar scene at the grocery store checkout lines. A child will ask if he or she may have a candy bar, and the parent says "No." When the child whines and asks a little louder, the parent gives the child a candy bar, not realizing that the behavior pattern has just been reinforced. This "behavior trap" is just one example of how we teach behaviors.

Our approach emphasizes looking at the behavior of your child and how the environment influences how he or she behaves. Our general framework for discussing this approach will be looking at the ABCs of behavior: Antecedents, Behaviors, and Consequences. We will begin with the first part of the framework we have identified: Antecedents.

Teaching Behaviors With Antecedents

An antecedent is any event which occurs before a behavior. You can think of antecedents as anything in your child's environment that "signals" him or her to behave in a particular way. The

noise of a crowded room, a ringing telephone, and the laughter of another person are all examples of events or conditions that might be antecedents for a behavior. That is, they may be events that affect the behavior of your child.

In many cases, behavior changes can be produced by changing the antecedents to the behaviors. To do this, you first have to "step back" and look at the environment of your child to see if you can identify antecedents currently controlling behavior that might be changed. For example, during dinner, Amy repeatedly gets out of her seat, runs around, plays with toys, watches TV, and returns to the table. Amy's parents notice that often during dinner time, toys are scattered around the house and the television is on. The toys and the television may be antecedents to her behavior. Teaching Amy to put away her toys before dinner and turning the television off may decrease this behavior.

Another approach would be to provide antecedents for desirable behavior *before* any undesirable behavior occurs. For example, when Joshua comes home from school, he hangs up his coat and sits in the living room while his mother works at her computer. After several minutes of this, he becomes bored and begins to whine and soon has a tantrum. Talking to Josh and giving him a game to play (antecedents) when he first gets home will replace the antecedent of the quiet unstimulating room which leads to his whining.

For convenience, we have grouped the antecedents which control the behavior of children into three categories. In each case, examples are given to illustrate how changing a particular antecedent might change the behavior of the child.

Setting

Parents often complain that their children may behave nicely in one place and turn into real "terrors" in others. It is not uncommon for schools and parents to blame each other for a child's misbehavior because it happens only at school or only at home. The *setting* or location in which a behavior occurs is an example of an ongoing or long-term antecedent.

Many times you can make physical changes in your child's surroundings. Sometimes you can do this by rearranging the furniture. For instance, if your child is easily distracted at the dinner table by the television or visitors in the next room, you can move the child's chair or the table, or close a door to block the child's vision of whatever distracts him.

Another way to change the surroundings is to add equipment that will make it easier for your child to behave the way you would like. For instance, you could add a coat hook low enough on the wall for your child to reach, to make it easier to hang up her coat. Often, all it takes are temporary changes to help your child behave a certain way. Suppose your child has trouble switching from playing, to taking a bath, and then going to bed. By starting a new ritual or routine, and through the careful placement of toys, you can help make this classic challenge a little easier. You could put some of your child's favorite toys in the bathroom. Water toys or an attractive bubble bath might then help to get your child into the tub. Finally, putting favorite books or stuffed animals near your child's bed may make the transition to bed easier.

Other examples of changing your child's surroundings to control behavior include going grocery shopping when the store is not crowded, or putting up a gate to restrict your child to one area.

Immediate Environmental Events

Within a location or setting, there are a variety of short-term events that can affect behaviors. Examples include loud noises, the start of a favorite TV show, a slight injury, or traffic noise. Most of us write messages to ourselves to remind us to do certain tasks. In much the same way, you can give your child "reminders" that they can see. For instance, you can set a kitchen timer to remind your child to go to the next task. You can post signs at critical areas for children who can read, or pictures (like those on the following "Getting Ready" chart) for those who can't read. One of the most creative uses of environmental events we've heard of was a mother who put a rubber duck under a doormat to remind children to wipe their feet when they heard the "quack" as they walked into the room.

Chart For Getting Ready For School On Time

Things To Do	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

Behavior Of Others

The actions of others may be the most important antecedents to a child's behavior. It is especially likely that parents' behaviors (for example, commands, touching, eye contact, etc.) will become important antecedents. Much of what your child learns is the result of your using your behavior as an antecedent for the behavior you are teaching your child.

You can teach your child certain behaviors through the antecedents that are often called prompts or cues. We can group these teaching methods into three classes: gestural, physical, and verbal. In this section the main emphasis will be on the use of verbal prompts to control behavior. First, however, here are some examples of how gestural and physical prompts may be used to teach.

Gestural prompts or cues are simply movements made without touching or speaking. For instance, you can point to a toy that should be picked up, or imitate someone drinking from a glass to give a cue to your child to drink her juice.

Physical prompts or cues are those that you use to physically guide your child to perform the desired behavior. You can guide the child completely or with just enough physical force to cue your child in the proper direction. Such cues can be very effective ways of teaching tasks that children learn gradually, such as dressing or walking. So that your child does not come to depend on them, give only as many cues as are necessary, and gradually fade out your use of physical prompts.

Verbal cues may also be termed commands or requests. When a child follows the command, he or she is said to comply. One of the major (and most frequent) problems parents encounter is their child's noncompliance. Often the problem concerns the antecedents, such as the way in which the command was given. Forehand and McMahon (1981) have discussed five types of instructions that are potential problems.

1) Chain commands—A series of instructions which are often unrelated. (For example, an adult may say "Hang up your coat, go upstairs, wash your hands, pick up your toys, and come on down and have a snack.") For some children there is too much material presented at one time and they may simply forget what was asked of them. In addition to the problem chain commands may present to the child, they also present a problem for parents when there is partial compliance. Should the parent reinforce the child for doing some of what was asked, or correct the child for not performing the entire sequence? A related problem is that unless the parent interrupts the chain command, reinforcement provided at the end of the sequence is necessarily delayed for the first commands in the sequence. The way to correct such a problem is to give only one command at a time, or only as many as the child has demonstrated that he or she can handle.

2) Vague commands—Commands that do not clearly specify what behaviors are expected (for example, "be a good boy," or "go help your sister"). The child's understanding of what it is to be a "good boy" or to "help" his sister may be quite different from that of the parents. Also, these commands may mean different things at different times. For example, telling your child "behave yourself" when you are dropping her off for a party means something entirely different than when she is going into the library.

3) Question commands—It is very common for parents to address their children with the polite form of a command often used with other adults (for example, "could you...", "would you like to...", or "do you want to..."). These commands may become problems when the parent is not really asking if the child "wants" to do something, but is instead giving a command. It is not uncommon, for instance, for a child to answer a "do you want to..." command with "no." In this case, the child has been asked a question, given an implied choice, and answered the question. The parent then is in the position either of accepting this answer or restating the command. The solution to the problem is simply to state commands as commands and to use the question command when you are actually offering a choice.

4) "Let's" commands—Adults often give children commands by describing the task as if it is going to be a cooperative activity (for example, "Let's hang up your coat"). As with question commands, the message is really misleading, implying that the child will have help. Children, therefore, may wait for the adult to begin the activity or, in some cases, simply wait for the adult to do the task. If the child does comply with a "let's" command it is very likely that future requests of this kind may not be as effective, since the child may have learned that the command implies a greater demand than is stated. From the child's point of view, he or she may feel "cheated." The solution, as with question commands, is to use this form of request only when it is really intended.

5) Commands followed by verbalizations—Commands that include rationales or questions. Here, the problem is that parents may "bury" their commands in other verbal material and that the child's compliance is interrupted when his or her attention is shifted. Parents may believe that the child should understand *why* the command is being given. Such explanations are often quite appropriate; however, when there is a problem with compliance, reasons should be kept to a minimum and they should precede the command. As an example, rather than telling a child "Please clean up your room. We are having company tonight and you do want Sammy to be able to see your toys, don't you?", one might more effectively say, "We are having company tonight. So that Sammy can see your toys, I want you to clean up your room."

Using Prompts

It is especially necessary to use prompts when the desired behaviors occur infrequently or not at all. Consider the following issues when using prompts to teach behaviors.

1) *How much prompting to use.* If you don't give prompts often enough, the child may ignore them altogether and may engage in inappropriate behaviors that have to be corrected. When in doubt, therefore, it is best to overprompt a little at first to ensure that the desired behavior can occur and can be reinforced. Of course, the goal is for the child to perform the desired behavior with as little prompting as possible. "Intensity level" may mean different things depending upon which type of prompt is used. For instance, with a physical prompt it usually means how much pressure is applied. In some cases, however, it may refer to *where* the pressure is applied. For instance, if the child is being taught to scoop food with a spoon, maximum intensity might be applied to the hand holding the spoon. A lesser degree of intensity might be pressure at the wrist, then at the elbow, etc. Similarly, with verbal prompts, the "intensity" dimension may be the actual intensity of the voice, or how much is said.

2) *When to prompt.* A prompt should be given just before the desired behavior. Many times, however, parents wait until the child makes a mistake before giving the prompt. For instance, if the parents are trying to teach their daughter to eat with a spoon instead of with her hands, they may wait first to see if she is going to pick up the spoon. If she instead picks up the food with her hands, the parent may "correct" this behavior by prompting the child to pick up her spoon. In this case, the prompt *followed* undesired behavior. Since prompts lead to reinforcement, a prompt that is used after an undesired behavior may actually reinforce the undesired behavior! Of course, since you cannot see into the future, you must first observe the child eating to determine whether prompting is necessary or not. Ideally, you decide whether a prompt is needed and if it is, you give it *before* an undesired behavior occurs. Then gradually, you phase out the prompt until the child can perform the desired behavior without a prompt. Sometimes you might purposely not prompt the behavior and observe whether the child still needs the prompt. However, do this sparingly or the prompt will seem inconsistent.

3) *How to fade prompts.* Although there are some prompts that are not intended to be faded (for example, calling out "time for supper"), in most cases the goal is for the child to be independent. Eliminating the prompt can be very difficult (thus the caution to prompt only if necessary) and must be done gradually. For example, if the parent has been verbally prompting the child to wash up before supper, the proper way to fade out the prompt is to gradually use briefer and briefer prompts (for example, from "Time for supper. Joe, I want you to go to the bathroom and wash your hands" to "Time for supper. Joe, go wash up" to "Supper!"—with several possible intermediate steps).

Fading environmental prompts is similar. We need the prompts to teach the behaviors, but we want the child to be able to live without them eventually. So we fade them gradually. It might be difficult, however, to fade out the sound of the squeeze toy under the mat that reminds children to wipe their feet. Written signs or pictures would be easier to fade (even if not as elegant!). For instance, a colored poster of directions could be faded to a black and white copy of the poster, which is then faded to less detailed drawing on the poster, and then lighter and lighter outlines. Likewise, the poster might be gradually reduced in size until it disappears altogether.

Teaching Behaviors With Consequences

A consequence is any event which follows a behavior. Consequences can be pleasant or unpleasant, or they may have no effect at all. If the consequence is pleasant, it is more likely that the behavior will occur again. In this section we will discuss one type of consequence: *reinforcement.* A reinforcer is any person, thing, or event which, when provided as a *consequence* of a behavior, makes that behavior more likely to happen again.

Whether a consequence acts as a reinforcer depends on the effect it has on the behavior. Sometimes consequences don't affect behavior in the way we intend. For example, if giving Johnny a piece of cracker each time he shares a toy with his sister does not increase the amount of sharing, the cracker is not a reinforcer for Johnny. While this may not seem very logical, it happens all the time, as we will discuss a little later in this section. On the other hand, even though your intent is to punish your child for teasing the dog, if you scold her each time she teases the dog, and she begins to tease the dog more and more, the scolding is a reinforcer for that behavior.

So what may work for one child may not work for another. Also, it may work sometimes, but not always. For instance, an ice cream cone may reinforce behavior after school but not after a big dinner. Each consequence must be assessed for your child. That is, if the presentation of the person, thing, or event increases the behavior it follows, by definition it is a reinforcer.

Using Reinforcers To Teach Or Increase Desirable Behavior ("Catch'em Being Good!")

Parents and their children influence each other's behavior a great deal through the use of reinforcers. One of the most effective ways parents can increase desirable behaviors in their children is to use reinforcers as consequences for the desired behaviors and to avoid reinforcing undesirable behaviors.

One way you can often identify reinforcers is by watching what your child does when he or she is left on his own. Does your child seek out particular people or choose any particular activities? Once you identify reinforcers, you can decide which ones you'll want to use. You may decide to use *tangible items* you give to your child (such as a piece of fruit, or a toy, or tokens that can be traded in for something later), *social reinforcers* (such as a hug, a smile, or praise), or *activities* (such as going to the park, playing a game, or baking cookies).

The first rule to follow in using reinforcers is to seek out a natural consequence of the behavior. For instance, being praised is a more natural consequence for your child doing what you just asked than getting tokens. For most children, parents' attention and/or praise are the most effective reinforcers. However, in many cases, especially for younger children, the more natural reinforcers are not strong enough to change the behavior. In these cases it may be necessary to use both tangibles and social reinforcers at first and then to gradually fade out the tangible ones. It is also important to have a variety of reinforcers that you can use that your child won't get tired of.

ACTIVITY

Sometimes parents have great difficulty identifying reinforcers for their children. We suggest that under each of the categories listed below you make a list of as many reinforcers as you can think of for your children.

Tangible Items	Social Reinforcers	Activities

For reinforcers to work most effectively, you should follow these general rules:

1) *Reinforce immediately after the behavior*. We cannot emphasize this enough. If you don't reinforce the behavior immediately, your child may not know what behavior is being reinforced. If you give the reinforcer before the child does the desired behavior (for example, "I'll give you a cookie now, but you've got to clean up your room later"), the child is likely not to follow through. This is often called Grandma's Rule: "First you work, then you play."

2) *Tell your child specifically what behavior is being reinforced.* For example, tell your child, "Here is a cookie for cleaning up your room." Just providing a reinforcer may be enough, but explaining what the reinforcer is for often helps a child understand the relationship between the behavior and the reinforcer.

3) *Reinforce only desirable behavior*. This may sound obvious, but parents often feel that their child will be upset if he or she doesn't get the reinforcer, and therefore will deliver it regardless of the child's behavior.

4) *For children just beginning to talk, tell them what they must do to earn a reinforcer*. For example, say "when you... (or) after you... then you may have...." This is preferable to the "if you..., then you may have..." statement because when you say "if," you imply that your child can decide not to do something.

5) *Avoid negotiating*. Once you have stated what it is you want them to do, don't let them plead or bargain with you. Likewise, don't beg or nag them after you have stated the request. Otherwise, children can be taught to ask for more by arguing. If it becomes obvious that the conditions need to be changed (for example, if you realize you are asking your child to do too much for the amount of reinforcement you are giving), negotiate later.

6) *Avoid promising reinforcers that you cannot deliver*. If you promise your child a toy for a dry bed, for instance, he may justifiably feel cheated if you never give him the toy when his bed is dry. Some children can be told that they may go and choose something later, but you should make sure that they understand that the reinforcer will come later before explaining to them what you want them to do.

7) *When your child is first learning the desired behavior, reinforce every response*. Later you can reinforce only once in a while. We'll discuss this rule in more detail in the next section, but being consistent is a good way to help your child learn the desired behavior.

Teaching New Behaviors—Shaping

In the last section, you learned about using principles of reinforcement to increase the rate of behaviors. Before you put the principles to use, however, you need to decide just how well the child must perform the behavior before you will reinforce him or her. This is called the *criterion* for reinforcement. You may state the criterion in terms of the exact behaviors to be completed (for example, brushing one's teeth), the rate at which the behavior is to be performed (getting dressed within 10 minutes), the accuracy of the behavior (pouring milk without spilling), or the duration of the response (sitting in one's chair for the whole meal).

A problem arises, however, when the behavior you want to increase never occurs or occurs only very rarely. In these cases, the criterion is too rigid. As a result, you reinforce the behavior so rarely that your child may never learn about the conditions under which he or she will be rewarded. It is likely that other, less desirable, behaviors will occur instead. For example, if you are teaching your child to use a fork instead of his or her hands, and you wait until the child grasps the fork correctly and spears the food before you give reinforcement, it is possible that your child will not earn a reinforcer during a meal. Instead, the child may continue to eat with his or her fingers, a competing behavior that is reinforced naturally by the taste of the food.

Another problem may occur when your criterion for reinforcement is too lenient. In this case, you would be reinforcing behaviors which already occur at a high rate. Suppose in teaching your

child to use a fork, you reinforce each time he or she lifts the fork from the plate. If lifting the fork is a well-established part of your child's normal behavior, two things may happen: first, your child may tire of the reinforcer quickly; and secondly, he or she may not progress past the step of picking up the fork.

It is obvious that a changing criterion is needed to teach a behavior that occurs only rarely. At first you use a lenient criterion (for example, picking up the fork), but later require more (for example, spearing some food) before you give a reinforcer. As the child comes closer and closer to the end goal, you gradually change the criterion. This process is called *shaping*.

Types Of Performances That Can Be Shaped

To increase the *duration* of a desired behavior, begin by reinforcing short durations of the behavior, gradually lengthening the criterion. For example, consider shaping the amount of time a child stays in his or her seat at the table. You might use a favorite food as the reinforcer. Observations of young children have shown that they often sit for 30 seconds at a time, but rarely more than this. Parents therefore reinforce each instance of "good sitting" that lasts 30 seconds. As the child begins to stay in her seat for longer intervals, the criterion can be changed to 45 seconds, later to 1 minute, and then 1 1/2 minutes, etc. Since this process will take time, parents should plan to continue shaping behavior during several mealtimes.

To increase the *accuracy* of a desired behavior, you teach your child to modify his or her performance until it achieves the desired result. An example is teaching your child to make his bed. First, you must observe your child to be sure that he is able to unfold the sheet, but not to position it correctly or tuck it in. You would first reinforce your child any time he attempted to make the bed, and then reinforce each time he comes closer to correctly positioning the sheets. As the shaping process continues, your child learns how to tuck in the bottom sheet, place the top sheet, tuck in the top sheet, and so on. Again, the process is a gradual one that the child would learn only after quite a bit of training.

To increase the *speed* with which a child performs a certain behavior, parents must look at the rate at which their child is performing the task. A typical example is when your child gets dressed, and dawdles unless you continually prompt. To shape the desired behavior, first determine how long it normally takes your child to perform the task. Then, set a reinforcement criterion for your child to complete the task slightly under this time and tell the child to see how fast he or she can go. You can use a kitchen timer to show the child what the goal is. If the child "beats the clock," give a reinforcement. As the child speeds up with each attempt, make the criterion time shorter until the task is completed in a reasonable amount of time.

If the child does not meet the criterion several times in a row, revise the criterion so that you can continue to provide some reinforcement. Take care, however, not to revise the criterion during or immediately after an attempt to perform the desired behavior. For example, don't say, "Well, you didn't beat the clock, but I'm going to give you the reward anyhow for trying." While

this may seem to be a sensitive way of shaping behavior, it is more likely that your child is shaping your behavior than vice versa!

Shaping Inappropriate Behaviors

In much the same way that parents shape desired behaviors, they can also shape unwanted behaviors. As a result, a child may learn to go from mildly annoying behaviors to destructive or dangerous acts. Such shaping probably occurs quite often, without parents realizing it.

Consider, for example, a child who whines to get in bed with his parents. At first, the parent may give in to the child, thus reinforcing this behavior. The next time the parent refuses to allow the child to get in the bed, the child's response will probably be to whine louder or start to cry. The parent wants to stop the whining and crying and may let the child in bed. The next time, if the crying is not reinforced (that is if the parent refuses to let the child in bed), the child may scream, or kick, hit, etc. The parent wants to avoid these behaviors (particularly in the middle of the night!), and may well give in to the child, thus reinforcing even more severe behaviors. Finally, the behavior becomes so intense that the parent may not be able to get any sleep unless he or she takes the child into the bed.

Another example of shaping inappropriate behavior concerns parents' use of punishment. Punishment may suppress behavior, and if the child's behavior is unpleasant to the parent, the use of punishment is reinforced when the child stops the behavior. However, as we will discuss later, children can adapt to punishment, so that eventually mild punishment does not stop the behavior. The parent may increase the intensity of the punishment until the child stops the behavior. Again, the child may adapt to the more severe punishment, and the parent may again increase the intensity of punishment. If this pattern continues, parents may reach the point where they become physically abusive. Seen in this light, child abuse (and family violence in general) is not so hard to understand; one can see why this problem is so widespread. The principles of shaping behavior actually predict that abuse will occur in families where punishment is the primary method of behavior control.

Using Token Reinforcers

A token reinforcer is any object—a star, sticker, or I.O.U., that can be traded in for some other reinforcer. Whatever the tokens are exchanged for has already been identified as a motivator which is likely to bring about a desired behavior.

One of the most obvious advantages of token systems is that they allow the use of reinforcers almost anywhere at any time. Unlike food reinforcers or activity reinforcers, tokens can be given quickly, without interrupting the task at hand. Because the child must save up the tokens to trade in on something else, he or she doesn't lose interest or become bored too soon even if food reinforcers are ultimately involved. Thus, a child can earn five or six tokens in an hour and still

be motivated to earn more. If food were used as the reinforcer that frequently, we would expect the child to lose interest in continuing the task or behavior.

Another advantage of token reinforcers is that they create an economy or system of exchange which in itself can be educational to the child. Even a very young child may learn some counting skills, and the system of using charts or tokens is like the adults' system of earning money for performing certain tasks. As you develop a system of token reinforcement, you can give different amounts of tokens, depending upon the response you want, the age of the child, or the amount of progress the child is making.

You can also use a variety of reinforcers and allow the child to choose from a "menu" of previously agreed-upon reinforcers. This also helps prevent the child from getting tired of the same reinforcer as well as letting the child make choices, which is often reinforcing in itself.

Tokens are also useful in teaching the child to wait, a skill that is often difficult to learn. Tokens are also antecedents in that they serve as reminders of what the child needs to do to complete a task. For instance, if a child sees that she only needs to fill in two circles to earn an activity reinforcer, she may be more likely to continue to respond.

Finally, the use of tokens allows a parent to administer a mild, non-physical method of punishment by giving "fines" or removing tokens whenever the child reverts to behaviors that he knows are inappropriate.

Sometimes tokens don't work. Generally, the most common reason for this is that the stars or stickers are not backed up by other reinforcers—thus, they are not really tokens. Teachers often may use stars, stickers, or "happy faces" to indicate good work. So, by the time parents start using a star chart, some of the novelty may have worn off for both the child and the parent.

At first, it may seem that such tokens are not necessary. For the child who has not had a lot of experience with earning stickers or stars, a parent may be able to reinforce desired responses without using backups. In these cases, parents initially report success and comment that they don't even need to back up the tokens. The problem surfaces a couple of weeks later, however, when parents report that they have stopped the program because it was no longer working.

Another serious problem occurs when the token reinforcers are not traded in early enough and often enough. For example, parents may require the child to earn a week's worth of tokens before being able to trade them in for another reinforcer. This may be appropriate for some children, but others will need immediate trade-ins that are gradually spaced farther and farther apart.

Similarly, a problem can occur when the task to be reinforced is too great and/or is not broken down into small, achievable steps. For instance, earning a token for picking up all of the toys on the floor may be too great a demand on the child who will not even pick up a single toy. Parents should probably begin with the requirement that only a few items should be picked up, and then reinforce with a token each item picked up.

In some cases, the number of tokens that a child has to earn may be too great for the backup reinforcer earned. Most children would not maintain the desired behavior if they had to accumulate two weeks' worth of tokens to earn a single snack. If it is not really reinforcing, the system may appear to work at first and then falter. This is another reason to allow the child a choice of reinforcers.

These points emphasize the need for you to carefully plan and regularly review the token system you are using with your child. It is important to continually assess the behavior required, the schedule of rewards, and the choice of backup reinforcers. The child's behavior should be the best index of whether the system is working. If the desired behavior occurs less and less frequently, if backup reinforcers are not in demand, or if the child seems uninterested, it is time to examine your system and review the guidelines for using token reinforcers.

Examples Of Token Systems That Can Be Used With Children

Token systems can be simple or complex. The system you choose will depend upon the age or cognitive level of your child. Some type of token system is appropriate for almost any child. The examples below demonstrate a wide range of complexity. They differ mainly in the number of tokens required for the backup reinforcer—that object for which the child trades in tokens. Even with an older child, it is usually best to start with one of the simpler systems and advance as the child is able.

The systems shown below use either stickers, checks, or points. Some parents find using pennies or poker chips to be more effective. Whatever you use, remember that to retain their effectiveness, the tokens *must be traded in* for some other reinforcer.

Single Token

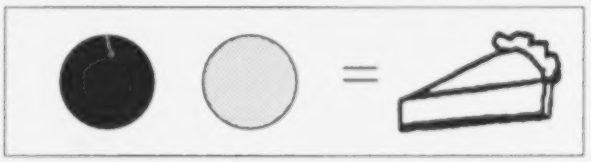
The sticker is given immediately after the child completes the specified behavior. At first, the exchange of the sticker for the backup reinforcer should occur shortly after the desired behavior occurs. After the child has used the system several times, you can extend the time the child keeps the sticker; for example, until after supper or before bedtime for a food reinforcer.

Sample Chart

Here the child must do the same behavior two times, earning two stickers for the backup reinforcer. For example, he must pick up toys twice to earn the ice cream cone. In this case, a

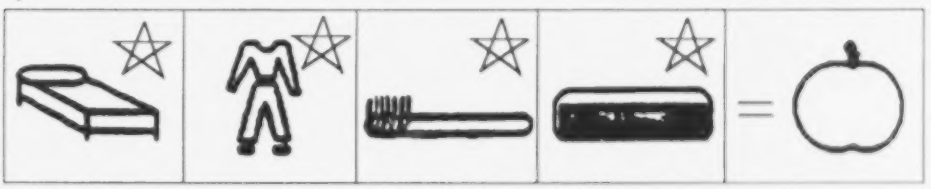
picture of the backup reinforcer shows the child what he may get for trading in his tokens. The backup reinforcer can change from time to time (in fact, it is nice to give the child a choice), but it is important that the pictured object is indeed available.

Sample Chart



This chart is almost the same as the previous one except that two different behaviors are required; for example, picking up toys and washing hands. The stickers are different colors to indicate the two different behaviors that need to be performed. Both behaviors are required before the backup reinforcer is available.

Sample Chart



This chart is different from the previous two in that the behaviors to be performed are pictured on the chart. This is especially helpful when there are several behaviors which must be performed in the same order each day. The sequence used here might be appropriate to help a child get ready for school each day.

Daily Chart

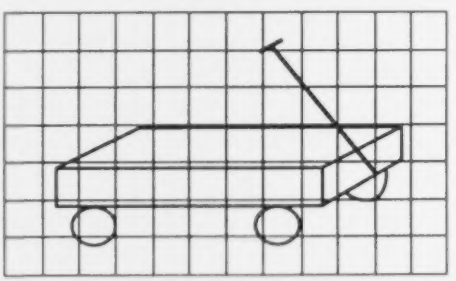
The seven boxes in this chart represent the days of the week. In this example, it is possible to earn one sticker a day. When the child earns the specified number of stickers (for example, seven), he or she may trade the chart in for a special treat (for example, a trip to the local fast-food restaurant).

Daily Chart

	Make Bed	Ready on time for school
Monday	●	●
Tuesday	●	●
Wednesday	●	●
Thursday	●	●
Friday	●	●

In this example, two behaviors are required for each day. For charts of this type it is important to carefully choose the criterion for exchange and to be sure the child understands it. For instance, in this example, the criterion might be to earn eight or more stickers. For some children, it may be necessary to set the criterion low at first and then to gradually increase it.

Sticker Bank



In this example, the picture represents the ultimate trade-in (the backup reinforcer). Since the object is somewhat expensive, more desired behaviors are required. After the child completes a single behavior that the parents want to reinforce (there could be several behaviors required and parents might want to occasionally reinforce some behaviors that were not specified in advance), the child is given a sticker to put in one square of the "token bank." Or, the child might use a crayon to color in a square, or remove sticker(s) earned from a chart that has been covered over with stickers. Once the chart is complete, the trade-in can occur.

Point System

What Hugh Does	How Many Points	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
Gets dressed by self	10	10	10					
Cleans up after breakfast	5	5		5				
Remembers books & lunch for school	5		5	5				
No tantrums in school	10		10					
No tantrums out of school	10	10	10	10				
Plays with sister without fighting	5	5		5				
Cleans up after dinner	5	5	5	5				
Goes to bed without complaining	10							
Bonus	0-10		5					
Total		35	45	30				

In this example, the child may earn points for meeting specific requirements each day. The number of points for each task varies depending upon the difficulty for the child. Each day Hugh's parents list the total number of points earned. At a later time, the points may be traded in for privileges agreed upon earlier or for other reinforcers. This system requires some number skills and may be helpful in teaching simple budgeting. The particular tasks chosen and the number of points assigned to each task may change. Parents may want to have a weekly "conference" with their child to discuss progress and to hear the child's suggestions.

Using Consequences To Decrease Undesirable Behavior

The focus of this chapter has been the use of positive approaches in parenting, both to teach new behaviors and to decrease inappropriate behaviors. Through discussions of antecedents, reinforcement, and shaping, we have stressed simple, effective, positive techniques that parents can use with their children. While there is little question that punishment is an effective means of decreasing behavior, there are some problems with punishment that are helpful to understand. In the following section, we will discuss various ways to decrease negative behavior, including removing the reinforcers for negative behaviors, increasing other positive behaviors, punishment, and time out, a form of punishment.

The Possibility Of A Skill Deficit

Sometimes a child may behave inappropriately because he or she doesn't have the skills to perform a task more appropriately. For example, 3-year-old David usually eats food with his fingers. When he does try to eat with a fork or spoon, more food ends up on his shirt and on the floor than in his mouth. The first task is to determine whether David has the basic skills to eat with a fork or a spoon neatly. If he doesn't, scolding or punishing in some other way will not help him eat more neatly. Similarly, a child who has toys all over his room may not have learned where to put his toys to keep his room clean. Teaching him these skills in a positive way will probably take less effort than constantly nagging him.

Removing The Reinforcers For Undesirable Behavior

Principles of social learning theory apply to undesirable behavior as well as to desirable behavior. Antecedents signal or cue a behavior to occur. This behavior is then followed by a consequence. If this consequence is a reinforcer, the behavior is likely to occur again. Reinforcement can maintain undesirable behavior as well as desirable behavior. If you can identify what is reinforcing an undesirable behavior and you carefully withdraw that reinforcer, you will lessen the chances that the behavior will occur again. Two factors, however, may make this difficult: 1) Not all reinforcers are easy to recognize—a glance or smile from a parent may be enough to reinforce a behavior; and 2) The reinforcer need not follow every occurrence of a behavior to maintain it. Actually, a behavior which is reinforced only occasionally is likely to last a long time once the reinforcer is withdrawn.

For instance, giving in to a child's tantrum in the grocery store by giving the child the candy she wants may reinforce the tantrum, making it more likely to happen on the next visit to the store. The parent's behavior of giving in is also reinforced when the child stops crying. Sometimes this is called a "reinforcement trap," because the end result is that the parent may become "trapped" into teaching the child to misbehave. There is a similar pattern which is called the "criticism trap." Parents respond to misbehavior with criticism and this may have two simultaneous, but quite different effects: first, it may cause the child to stop the unwanted behavior *momentarily*, which reinforces the parent's criticism; and second, it may reinforce the child's misbehavior, since this behavior received some form of attention (which is often a reinforcer for children).

Here are some examples of reinforcement traps which most parents have encountered at some time:

1. Tom and Dad are standing in line at the store.
   Tom: "Dad, can I have some of that candy?"
   Dad: "No, Tom, it's too close to supper."
   Tom: "Aw, Dad, please! Come on. You never let me have anything! Mom lets me get candy whenever we come to the store."
   Dad: "Well, o.k., but just this time."

2. Pru: "Mommy, I don't want to go to sleep right now."
   Mom: "It's bedtime now, Pru. Go to sleep. I'll see you tomorrow." Mom kisses Pru, closes the door and starts down the stairs.
   Pru: "Please, Mommy, I want another story!" Pru cries for a minute or so, then pauses.
   Pru: "Mommy, I want a drink of water." Mom goes up with a glass of water.
   Mom: "Now go to sleep, honey. Good night." Mom leaves the room and starts downstairs again. Pru begins to cry.
   Pru: "Mommy, it's too cold up here. I need a blanket!" Mom comes back and puts a third blanket on Pru.
   The familiar scene continues!

Ignoring Negative Behavior

The attention given to a child is an example of a common reinforcer that parents can often use to increase desired behaviors and can effectively withdraw to decrease undesirable behaviors. Since most children's behavior is reinforced by parents' attention, removing that attention will decrease those behaviors. This means you will have to ignore your child's undesirable behavior—not an easy task for a parent. Once you have clearly identified the behavior to be ignored, the rules that follow should help to guide you along.

Do not have eye contact or use other nonverbal cues. Attention that is reinforcing can be as subtle as a glance, a grin, or raised eyebrows. Even a frown can be reinforcing to a child. When a child wants attention, getting a glance from a parent is better than no eye contact at all. To prevent accidental eye contact, parents should not face their child.

Do not have any verbal contact with your child. Avoid explanations while ignoring behavior. The longer a child can get the parent to explain why she is turning away, the less the parent is actually ignoring. If an explanation is appropriate, it should be given the first time you are going to ignore the behavior, and then it should not be repeated. A good, simple explanation would be, "I don't want to talk to you when you..."

Do not have any physical contact with the child. The less you touch a child when using planned ignoring, the more effective the procedure will be. Physical contact can be very reinforcing to a child, even rough contact. Standing is a good posture for the parent while ignoring a child. It reduces the opportunity for the child to initiate contact, since climbing on the parent and lapsitting would be very difficult. It also serves as a good cue for the child that the parent is ignoring. In cases where the child is initiating contact, the parent may have to leave the room to ignore the child. However, an important part of effective ignoring is paying attention to appropriate behavior when it resumes. Once out of the room the child is in, the parent may be unable to tell when the desirable behavior has begun.

Although ignoring can be a very effective procedure for changing undesirable behaviors that are reinforced by attention, there are certain instances when it is clearly not advisable:

- A parent would not want to use an ignoring procedure for a behavior which could be harmful to the child, to others, or to property. This is true because a side effect of ignoring behavior is that the undesirable behavior will at first escalate or get worse for a short period before it decreases.

- If for practical purposes or for any other reason, a parent knows that consistently ignoring a behavior is not possible,a different procedure should be used. If you ignore a behavior part of the time and reinforce it other times, ignoring will have no effect at all.

Reinforcing Other Behaviors

One way to decrease the rate of an unwanted behavior is to limit its opportunity to occur by increasing the amount of time the child is engaged in other desired behaviors. Using this procedure, the parent targets one or two undesirable behaviors and reinforces the child whenever a behavior *other* than the targeted behavior occurs. Eliminating any other reinforcers for the undesirable behavior further enhances the success of this procedure. For example, in a play situation, a parent may praise a child for all behaviors other than crying; for example, playing with toys, talking quietly, or laughing.

Providing token reinforcers works well with this kind of procedure. Parents can divide a day or a portion of a day into consecutive time periods. Then they can give a star, a check mark, or a token for each time period in which a targeted behavior does not occur. The time period should be long enough so that the procedure is manageable, but short enough that the child can frequently be successful earning the reinforcer.

Another version of this procedure involves reinforcing a behavior which is incompatible with an unwanted behavior. For example, reinforcing sitting will decrease standing simply because the two activities can't occur at the same time. Likewise, reinforcing talking quietly will decrease

yelling. Theoretically, the rate of the behavior being reinforced will continually increase, so you must be sure that the "appropriate" behavior is one that you would want occurring all the time. If you reinforce a child for watching TV rather than running through the house making noise, you need to be sure that TV watching is a behavior you want to increase. In this case, it may be better to reinforce another desirable behavior, such as playing a quiet game with a family member.

Punishment

The following are some general principles of punishment, some specific punishment procedures and a discussion of the problems and disadvantages of punishment. This will help you decide when it is appropriate to use punishment, and how to effectively use specific procedures if, or when, it is necessary.

Punishment is the presentation of consequences — an event or activity — which decreases the frequency of the behavior it immediately follows. The event or activity may be obviously unpleasant, such as spanking or telling someone to sit in the corner, or it can be a more subtle form of punishment, such as frowning. When considering using punishment to decrease undesirable behaviors, keep in mind that something that is punishing to one child may not be punishing to another. An event or activity is really punishing if and only if it decreases the behavior it follows.

Another important point about punishment is that there is a difference between long-term and momentary suppression (stopping) of a behavior. Short-term suppression of a behavior may reinforce the parent, but may not decrease the frequency or rate at which the problem behavior occurs over an extended period.

Generally, we are looking for a long-term decrease in unwanted behavior. Effective punishment should have an effect quickly, and and the effect should last. If it doesn't have an immediate effect, don't keep using it thinking that it will have an effect in the end. The problems or disadvantages in using punishment include the following:

Punishment doesn't teach appropriate behavior. Punishment is a procedure which strictly decreases a behavior. The child learns only what not to do, not what he or she should do. In addition, if parents often use physical punishment, they may be teaching their children aggression.

Children may become passive. A child who is often punished without learning appropriate ways of responding will likely show very few of any kinds of behaviors. The child will seem passive or apathetic.

Children may learn unwanted avoidance behaviors. To avoid punishment, a child will avoid those settings, people, or antecedents that he or she associates with punishment. For example, a child often punished by teachers may become truant or avoid academic activities. Lying is another way to avoid punishment from parents.

Children may develop escape behaviors. Escape is the act of removing oneself from punishment. Whereas avoidance occurs before the punishment, escape occurs after a punishment starts. Fighting back and running away are common examples of escape behavior.

Children may adapt to punishment. Children can adapt or become used to a certain level of punishment. This may result in parents increasing the intensity of the punishment. Earlier discussion in the section on shaping explained how child abuse may be shaped.

Behavior changes may not occur in all settings. When a certain behavior has a history of being punished by a specific person or in a specific place, it may not generalize (transfer) to other settings or other people. The speeding driver who speeds all the time and slows down only when he sees a police officer, demonstrates this principle.

Although punishment can present problems, there are certain behaviors and circumstances for which punishment should be considered:

- For behaviors which are dangerous to the child, to others, or to property;
- When well-planned positive approaches have been tried for a reasonable length of time and have failed to change behavior;
- For behaviors that are so annoying or irritating that they can't be tolerated;
- For inappropriate behaviors which are maintained by reinforcers beyond the control of the parents and which are more powerful than any the parents can provide. (This occurs more with older adolescents or teenagers.)

The following are general guidelines for the effective use of punishment:

1) *If you are going to use punishment, use it immediately.* Punishment, like reinforcement, must immediately follow the targeted behavior in order to change it. Simply promising or threatening punishment is not enough.

2) *Avoid gradual increases in the intensity of punishment.* Children adapt to punishment, which may lead the parent to gradually increasing the intensity of the punishment to maintain the suppressive effect. Studies have shown that a moderate intensity of punishment is less effective at suppressing behavior if there has been a gradual build-up to it, than if that intensity was used the first time. Thus,parents should select an intensity of punishment that is likely to produce a suppressive effect, but which does not physically or psychologically damage the child.

3) *Be consistent.* Once parents have targeted a behavior and a punishment, they must apply the punishment whenever the behavior occurs and with consistent intensity. Occasional punishment, unlike occasional reinforcement, does not lead to more effective learning.

4) *Avoid giving the child a lot of attention when you use punishment.* Generally, parents should use a punishment procedure without saying very much. For some children, a terse reprimand is appropriate; for other children, a reprimand may be reinforcing, and parents should remain neutral during the punishing procedure.

5) *Include a short statement of why the punishment is occurring.* Make this specific to the behavior that is being punished. Parents should avoid arguing with the child or having lengthy discussions.

6) *Once you start a punishment procedure, avoid compromise.* Children can do their best negotiating in the face of a punishment. Once they start the punishment, parents must follow through, ignoring all threats, insults, pleas, or promises of good behavior from their children. Otherwise, children may learn that their parents' actions are meaningless threats that they can avoid or escape.

7) *Don't provide reinforcement immediately after punishment.* Allow the child to show some appropriate behavior after being punished before providing him or her with positive attention. Don't reinforce the child being good during punishment. Some children learn that punishment is usually followed by a hug or other "making up" interactions, and may actually seek punishment for this reason.

8) *Don't give numerous threats.* If a parent is constantly giving threats, it probably means that the child has learned to ignore the first few threats.

9) *Don't punish by taking away something you've given or promised as a reinforcer.* Removing reinforcers unsystematically as a punishment procedure may have a detrimental effect on the behaviors you're trying to teach through use of those reinforcers. A child can learn that promised reinforcers don't have much value if they can be taken away as a punishment.

10) *Don't use punishment as an alternative to teaching.* Once again, punishment does not teach, it only decreases behaviors. Punishing a child for playing with electrical outlets does not teach him what toys or activities are appropriate. Any punishment procedure should include a procedure to teach more appropriate behaviors.

Time Out

One frequently used punishment procedure is *time out.* It involves taking the child from a reinforcing activity and putting him or her in a non-reinforcing situation. It is very important that

there is a strong contrast between the reinforcing activity and the non-reinforcing situation. While there is no specific, step-by-step procedure for using time out that is effective with all children for all behaviors, the following guidelines apply to most situations which warrant punishment.

1) *Define the problem behavior.* This is always an important first step. It will be easier for parents to remain consistent in the behaviors they expect if they are clear about the behavior that they are punishing. It may also help the child to know exactly what behaviors are allowed and what behaviors will be punished.

2) *Designate a location for time out.* Determine ahead of time where the child will go for time out. When a child is screaming, hitting, and throwing objects is not the time to decide this. Although few homes have "ideal" areas for time out, some locations may be better than others. It should be a place where the child cannot hurt himself and where there are no distractions—no toys, television, or radio. During time out, the child should not be able to do anything reinforcing;time out is not merely a time when the child has to be alone. The question of whether the child should be able to see or hear other people is complex. Sometimes a very effective punishment is to let the child see and hear other people having fun without allowing him or her to participate. However, *under no circumstances* should other people look at, talk to, or talk about the child in time out. Being the focus of attention, even during an attempted punishment, can be very reinforcing to some children.

   Often parents use the child's bedroom as the time out location. This usually is not effective because it is rare that a child cannot find something reinforcing to do in his or her own room. The bathroom is probably another area to avoid, especially if the parents are also trying to toilet train the child, or teach him to brush his teeth or bathe.

   If you have trouble finding a good location, a good alternative is a time out chair. Make sure the child cannot get involved in a reinforcing activity, and simply have him sit in a chair in a quiet corner or room.

   Determining the best time out area can mean trading off various criteria. In general you'll know if a time out area is effective if there is a decrease in the need for its use.

3) *Use time out immediately following behavior.* Immediately after the behavior occurs, take the child to time out. Just as a reinforcer has the greatest effect on the behavior it immediately follows, so does time out. Avoid making such threats or promises as, "After dinner you're going in the chair," or "When I get off the phone, you're going to get punished."

4) *Tell the child the conditions for ending time out.* For example, a parent could say, "No hitting. When the timer rings, you can get up." The parent should set a kitchen timer (that has a bell) for three minutes once the child is in time out. This will ensure consistency, allow the child to understand when he can leave time out, and prevent the parent from giving the child any attention.

5) *Determine the duration of time out.* It may not bother a child at all to be removed from a reinforcing activity for 10 seconds. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the longer the time out, the more effective the punishment. We suggest three minutes as a suitable time limit. In addition, the child should be required to be quiet during the final 30 seconds before being allowed to leave. Otherwise, the child may accidentally learn that screaming or "plea bargaining" will enable him or her to leave time out.

6) *Ignore inappropriate behavior during time out.* Parents should realize that any physical or verbal interaction with the child may provide reinforcing attention to the child. A show of emotion can also be reinforcing. Setting the timer will give parents an alternative response to interacting with their child. Parents should be especially careful to avoid all "plea bargaining," protests, or apologies. Once a time out procedure is initiated, parents should try not to "back down." Remember: the time out is the punishment; scolding or arguing is not necessary.

7) *Make sure the child stays in and behaves during time out.* If a child screams during the final 30 seconds, set the timer back about 30 seconds. If a child leaves the time out area, immediately put him back in time out and reset the timer for three minutes. You may have to do this repeatedly.

8) *Do not make up to the child after release from time out.* Parents should not try to make amends with the child immediately after punishment. Remain neutral until the child behaves appropriately, and then reinforce.

9) *Keep a written record.* Behavior should start to change within a few days. Keeping a written record will eliminate any uncertainty about the outcome of the procedure and will allow you to assess any needed changes in the procedure.

Summary

This chapter presented the basic principles which underlie virtually all behavior management procedures. We have stressed that people affect each other's behavior, and how both desirable and inappropriate behaviors may be learned by children.

The importance of this viewpoint lies in the ability to identify the antecedents and consequences that are affecting your child's behavior. Recognizing antecedents and consequences allows you to change the environment and thereby change your child's behavior as an alternative

to inappropriate behavior, and to recognize any cues in the environment which may be setting the occasion for inappropriate behavior. The use of punishment has been discussed for behaviors which have been unresponsive to positive procedures. The next step is to apply the principles to the everyday behaviors of your child.

As you use the information we have discussed, here are a few questions you can occasionally look back on.

Behavior and Management. Have you defined target behaviors in observable, measurable terms? Do you think you're a better observer now? Do you find yourself taking data on new behaviors as other behaviors now occur at satisfactory rates?

Antecedents. What changes have you made in the way you present demands to your child? Have you made changes in the setting? What about nonverbal prompts (signs, pictures,etc.)?

Consequences. Are you identifying more and more reinforcers for your child all the time? What tangible reinforcers are you currently using to address your child's behavior? Have you started a token system?

Are there behaviors where planned ignoring of your child was effective? Have you removed some other reinforcer for a target behavior (for example, turned off the television if your child hit his sister while they were watching television)? Are you using fines with the token system?

Are you using a time out program? Are you finding that you need to rely on punishment less and less? If you were using a punishment program prior to reading this book, have you changed the procedure to increase its effectiveness?

Part II

Strategies For Teaching Social Skills

Chapter 4

Talking Over Differences Without Getting Angry

CHAPTER 4

TALKING OVER DIFFERENCES WITHOUT GETTING ANGRY

When a young child has a difference of opinion with someone, it may be very difficult for him to talk about it without getting angry. To do this, he must be able to see things from the other person's point of view, and he must want to respond in such a way so as not to hurt the other person.

Understanding another's thoughts, needs, and feelings is what is referred to as understanding the "role" of another. Role taking is a very complex task. It requires, first, an understanding that not everyone sees, thinks, or feels alike; second, a realization that knowing another's thoughts or feelings might be useful; third, the ability to carry out the analysis needed; fourth, a way of keeping in mind what is learned from the analysis; and fifth, a knowledge of how to translate the results of analysis into effective social behavior (Hess and Croft, 1972). The young preschool child may be incapable of any but the simplest level of this behavior. The oldest preschool child will probably need assistance, in the form of prompts, instructions, and rewards to accomplish these tasks.

Role taking is especially important and especially difficult when the child is angry at the other person. When one is hurt by another it almost feels instinctive to try to hurt back. This is true for adults, but even more so for children who are just beginning to be able to take on another's role.

Empathy is caring about what a person is feeling. Feeling empathy must take place before a child can discuss a problem in a fairly calm fashion. Although we don't talk about it as often as we talk about language or cognitive development, empathy also develops as the child gets older.

Parents can facilitate the development of a child's empathic responses. Empathy can be fostered by directing the child's attention to the thoughts and feelings of others. Some examples of such focusing might be, "Daddy is sad when Grandma has to go back to Chicago"; "You miss Mommy when she has to go away on business, Mommy is lonely, too"; and, "Look, your brother feels proud that he can roller skate." These kinds of sharing also provide the child with role models showing how to deal appropriately with positive and negative emotions. Giving the child opportunities to take on the role of another can also help — "You be the teacher and I'll be the naughty boy," or "I'll be the Bad Wolf and you be Little Red Riding Hood." Finally, "... Giving children a lot of affection should help make them open to the needs of others and empathic, rather than absorbed in their own needs" (Cicchetti and Hesse, 1982).

In addition to knowing and caring about the needs and feelings of others, our children often need the words to express their feelings and to discuss their differences. Just as we teach children the meaning of "cracker" or "bye-bye," we can teach them the words to express their internal states. For example, often a toddler's temper tantrums erupt because he doesn't know how to express his own feelings. We can help by supplying the words, "You get mad when Mommy makes you go to bed," or "You sure feel jealous when Daddy is changing Noah's diaper and can't play with you." Sometimes just acknowledging a child's negative feelings is enough to help the child to regain control of himself.

Some children aren't developmentally mature enough to express complex emotions in words. It might be asking a child too much to try to use words to deal with an emotionally charged situation without helping him to cope with the strong negative feelings he has bottled up inside. If that is the case, we need to assist them in expressing their feelings in an appropriate way before we try to sit down and discuss the issues at hand. Being an adult, with more social experience than a child, a parent often knows what and how strongly a child is feeling better than the child himself does.

Parents know their children best and, from experience, they know how a child vents his or her feelings. One child might go into her bedroom and pound pillows, another child might go out and run circles around the backyard, and a third might only be able to release the feelings by sobbing loudly. If you don't have the words to express yourself, all of these strategies are adaptive behaviors. Sometimes even adults need to act out their aggressions before they can sit down and verbally iron out a problem. The parent can assist the child in knowing when he needs a break and can guide the child in using appropriate behaviors to let out one's anger. "I can tell you are very angry with Mike and you're not going to be able to settle this while you're feeling like you do, so why don't you go outside for 5 minutes and we'll talk about this later."

After the feelings have been vented, either verbally or physically, they can be verbally acknowledged by the parent. Then the young child may be ready to attempt to understand the perspectives of the other and discuss, in simple terms, how the conflict might be resolved. Initially, it will be important for the adult to "referee" the discussion if a successful resolution is to be achieved. The rewards of settling a dispute amicably come from getting one's needs met, keeping a friend or play partner happy, and receiving praise from one's parents.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Count the number of times that your child has a difference of opinion and how many times he talks about it.	Keep a tally. Count all day long, and record on Form 1 or Form 2.
Time how long your child can talk about a difference without getting angry.	Use Form 3 and a clock with a second hand.

Teaching Your Child How to Discuss Differences Without Getting Angry

Strategy 1. Define differences.

Tell the child that discussing differences means talking about it when we don't agree. Children live in a very black and white world; things are good or bad, right or wrong. The idea that I can think one thing and you can think something different, yet neither may be wrong, is a very difficult concept. Tell the child you may explain your ideas to each other and you don't need to be mad. Tell him it's OK to think different things. Accept his ideas without being angry. When you have to reject your child's opinions, take a minute to explain why you've made that decision: "I know you don't like wearing galoshes, but remember the last time you got all wet. You got a bad cold."

Eating out: One child wants McDonald's; one child wants Roy Rogers. Find out why each wants a different place. Discuss how people have different tastes. Neither is right. Sometimes we want a Big Mac, sometimes we want chicken. It's OK to be different. Try to work out a compromise.

You disagree on appropriate dress for school: Discuss that you like some things and the child likes other things. Say its OK to have different opinions. Accept his opinion in clothes if possible. If his choice is inappropriate, tell him he has a right to like different clothes, but for school he has to wear (pants) because (it's cold outside). When he comes home or goes to a friend's he can have his choice.

ACTIVITY

Identify two times that you accepted your child's opinion when it differed from yours:

1. _____

2. _____

Strategy 2. Discuss the importance of differences.

Talk about how people are different, and how they like different things. These differences sometimes cause people to argue. It's important for everyone to be able to tell their opinion. Exaggerate what might happen if everyone had the same likes and dislikes. Model acceptance of your child's different opinions.

Choosing where to eat: Exaggerate and make up a funny story about what would happen if everyone ate at McDonald's. "There would be everyone in the whole wide world trying to get in the door, trying to order food. Nobody could find a seat. We'd all have to pile up on top of each other to fit in," etc. "Boy, I sure am glad people like different food and make different choices!"

Choosing what game to play with a friend: The two children are fighting over what to play. "Boy, it sounds like you children want something different. It's good that we all like different things." Have each child tell his opinion. "I like the way you both listened to the other talk." Help mediate a compromise.

Strategy 3. Acknowledge the child's feelings.

The child needs help in learning to express his feelings. He needs to know that even if he doesn't get his way, someone understands how he feels. When a child is angry or frustrated because of differences, don't tell him not to have those feelings. Help him to control his actions, while giving him the right to all kinds of feelings. Sometimes just telling a child "I understand this makes you angry, but you still have to clean your room," may help.

At a store: The child wants something the parent doesn't want to buy. "I know it's hard for you to come into Toys-R-Us and buy a present for someone else." "It makes you feel sad when you can't have what you want."

In an argument with big sister: "You must feel frustrated because she is always older, always bigger." "It makes you angry that your sister won't let you play with her toys."

ACTIVITY

Specify three times you acknowledged your child's feelings:

My child did this:	I interpreted it this way:	His response was:
1.		
2.		
3.		

Strategy 4. Teach feeling words.

Feelings are abstract concepts. Some concrete words are easy for a child to learn. *Ball* is something round, something you play with, something to throw. You can touch it, hold it, see it. What is *angry? jealous?* Feeling words are harder to learn. It is important for a child to be able to use words to express feelings. If a child cannot use words, he will use behaviors. Help the child find the right words in order to express frustrations with words, not actions. This is a very complex process and often one that is too difficult for young children. They still need exposure to, and practice with, these abstract concepts and with being able to talk about them. Be patient with your child as he or she struggles with expressing feelings.

Teach feeling words, as you teach any new word to your child. Point out examples of sad, happy, frustrated, lonely, left out, jealous, etc. Use the word when the child feels these feelings. Label them when you see them in others.

Reading books: Talk about how the characters felt. Use the labels. Have the child label. "How do you think Goldilocks felt when she saw the bears? I'll bet she was scared. When have you felt scared?"

Role play: Read a story or make up one. Have the child act out all of the feeling words. For example: Goldilocks was *curious* about the house. She was *jealous* over the little chair. She was *happy* to see food. She was *lonely* and went out for a walk. She was *tired* and *sleepy*. She was *scared* of the bears.

Strategy 5. Express feelings for the child.

One of the most effective ways to teach a child to use words to express feelings is to do it for them when they are experiencing it. Being an adult, you may know better than the child exactly what she is feeling. Provide an example with your words. Sometimes the child is too emotionally charged and needs to vent emotions before he or she is ready to hear words. After the child has calmed down, label what the child felt in the situation.

The child and a friend had a fight: "I know you must feel sad that you have no one to play with."

The child cannot solve a problem: "You are very frustrated when you can't do something."

The child disagrees with you: "I know it makes you angry to go to bed, but you must."

Strategy 6. Provide options for the child's expression of anger.

The parent needs to let the child be angry, but parents do not have to let children express anger in ways that are unacceptable, such as hitting. Teach the child how he or she can express anger verbally or by hitting an object.

At bedtime: Tell the child that you'll accept verbal disagreement but not physical aggression. "When I make you go to bed earlier than you want, I know you get mad. You can tell me you're mad but you cannot hit me. Say, 'When I have to go to bed early I get mad!'."

At bedtime: Allow the child to do something physical to an inanimate object. "When I make you go to bed earlier than you want, I know you get mad. You can hit your pillow when you get mad, but you can't hit me."

ACTIVITY

Catch your child being good. I overheard my child use the following feeling words:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Strategy 7. Teach empathy.

Empathy is what happens when one identifies that someone else feels something about a situation and cares about that person's feelings. In teaching children to deal with differences, it is necessary to help them begin to see how the other person feels. Developmentally, this is a difficult task. Young children can be given assistance in using and practicing empathy. Talk about, "How do you think the other person feels if they never get to have their way?" Ask, "How would you feel if someone left you out?" They may need help expressing these feelings. Provide them with examples. Teach this skill when the child is calm. For example, talk about how each person would feel if they were made fun of, at a time when that is not an issue. When a child is upset or angry, it is much more difficult to have to put himself in someone else's shoes.

When a sibling is fighting with a friend: "How do you think she feels when she fights with her friend? She must be very angry that her friend will not play with her." Have the child answer as much as possible. Provide models as necessary.

Role play: Have the child act out, with dolls, a fight between two friends. Assist with statements like "I'll bet she is angry" or "He must feel sad." Encourage the child to think about how each person would feel.

ACTIVITY

Describe your recent "acting" experience with your child.

1. I suggested the role of _____ for me and _____ for my child. The acting included a discussion of these feelings:

_____

2. I suggested the role of _____ for me and _____ for my child. The acting included a discussion of these feelings:

_____

3. I suggested the role of _____ for me and _____ for my child. The acting included a discussion of these feelings:

_____

Strategy 8. Give the child the opportunity to take the role of another.

The more practice a child has with taking another's place, the more she is likely to develop empathy and be able to accept differences in others without being angry. The child can role play with you about real situations. You can have the child role play situations with dolls or stuffed toys. You can use fantasy and role play about fairies and princes, He-Man and She-Ra, etc. Children love to pretend. Let your imagination run wild and have fun.

In the car: For play while traveling, make "situation cards." The child picks one and you divide up the roles and discuss the situation. In the situations, emphasize and discuss how the people felt. What might they be thinking? How do you think they will act? For example:

You are alone in the forest.
Your brother broke your favorite toy.
Two friends are arguing over what to play.
The dog ran away.
Two pirates are trying to board your ship.
Mommy and Daddy are arguing over dinner.
Two friends can't decide what to do.

At bedtime: Make up stories or use old favorites. You play one role and let the child play another role. You be Red Riding Hood, and he can be the Big Bad Wolf. Stress how they felt. Talk about the differences in how they acted. Discuss the different things each wanted to happen.

Strategy 9. Help the child problem solve.

Part of the reason that it is so difficult for children to settle differences and compromise is that they do not want to compromise. They know what they want and they want it now! Another problem is that they only see their side, as we've discussed earlier. As parents, what this means is that you often have to mediate. It will take much practice for children to learn to compromise and discuss differences. You can, meanwhile, help them solve their differences in a way that will teach them problem-solving skills. As they get older they will be able to do more of this on their own. When two children fight, try to help them talk through their differences instead of making the decision for them. If you go through the steps of problem solving as often as possible, the child will begin to use those steps for himself. Basically, you: 1) define the problem, 2) discuss possible solutions, and 3) compromise or decide on one solution to try. Try to have the child or children come up with as much of this as possible. Ask leading questions. Acknowledge the feelings of each person.

Another advantage of having the child help with the solution, is that he is then more likely to be willing to carry out the solution. If the child helps solve the problem, he "owns" the problem and solution.

While playing: Two children are fighting over a truck and need to find a solution.

Dad: "I see you two are having a problem. What is the problem?"
Amy: "I want the truck."
Ben: "I had it first."
Dad: "So, there is one truck and two people want it. Am I right?"
Amy: "Yeah!"
Ben: "I had it first!"
Dad: "What can we do? Can we cut it in half?"
Amy & Ben: "No!"
Dad: "No? Oh dear, then what can we do?"
Ben: "I want to play in the sand box with the truck."
Amy: "But he's had it a long time. It's my turn!"
Dad: "But what can we do? Two people want turns. Could we take turns?"
Amy & Ben: "Yes."
Dad: "Ben, when you are finished with your turn, you could give Amy a turn?"
Ben: "Yes."
Dad: "How will we know when Ben's turn is over?"
Amy: "I'll set the timer and you can play with the truck for five minutes, then I get to play with the truck for five minutes."
Dad: "You can play with the motorcycle while you wait your turn."
Dad: "Great! Now two people want the truck and two people will have a turn! Now you both can be happy."

Mealtime: In this example, the parent wants the child to eat vegetables, and the child does not want them.

Mom: "You need to eat your broccoli!"
Child: "No! I hate it, I want more chicken!"
Mom: "I think we disagree. What do you think?"
Child: "Yes, I want chicken and you want me to eat this yucky broccoli."
Mom: (Helps the child state the problem if necessary.) "I want you to eat what? You want to eat what? Let's see, what can we do? What do you suggest?"
Child: "I'll eat more chicken and throw away the broccoli."
Mom: "No, that's not OK with me. How about if you eat all your broccoli before I give you more chicken?"
Child: "No!"
Mom: "OK, my solution is not OK with you and yours is not OK with me. What can we do? Do you think you could eat part of your broccoli and then I'll give you more chicken?"

Child: "I'm only eating two bites!"
Mom: "How about this much?" (indicate half)
Child: "That's all I'm eating."
Mom: "That's fine with me. Then you can have more chicken."
Child: "I hate broccoli!"
Mom: "I understand you don't like it, but it's good for you."
Mom: "You know, I'm really feeling great that we worked this problem out as partners."

Strategy 10. Observe and discuss others in conflict.

Watch other people solve problems. Observe TV characters. Point out to the child how each person feels. Have him state what he thinks each person wants. Talk about the solutions people arrive at. Use yourself as a model for problem solving. Talk out loud and let the child hear the process.

Finding lost keys: "I can't find my keys. Now what can I do? I can think where I last saw them. No, they're not there. Let's see, what can I do now? Look somewhere else. Yes, that's what I'll do."

Watching TV: Watch cartoons or shows that usually involve conflict. Examples: Sesame Street - Ernie and Bert, Grover and Kermit, Cookie Monster and Ernie.

Summary

Ten strategies for teaching the skill of discussing differences were presented. To review, they were:

1) Define differences
2) Discuss the importance of differences
3) Acknowledge the child's feelings
4) Teach feeling words
5) Express feelings for the child
6) Provide options for the child's expression of anger
7) Teach empathy
8) Give the child the opportunity to take role of another
9) Help the child problem solve
10) Observe/discuss others in conflict

Remember, children often have a hard time remaining calm and discussing differences. They need help expressing their feelings. Reinforce them for their attempts. Model acceptance of differences. Patience and perseverance on your part will eventually pay off.

Chapter 5

Understanding The Rules

CHAPTER 5

UNDERSTANDING THE RULES

According to psychologists, children learn rules as part of their moral or social development. For children to be able to follow rules, they need to be able to recognize differences between themselves and others. They develop an understanding of this concept not only through exposure to their surroundings and to different social experiences, but as a result of personal, internal changes in their social attitudes.

Children progress through different levels of social awareness of rules, so it is important for parents to consider the level of their child's development when trying to teach rules. For the young child, learning the rules of the household (don't run down the stairs; brush your teeth in the morning; etc.) and learning the rules of play are closely linked. Certain household rules must be followed, and parents must insist on this. But additionally, parents may enhance their child's rule development in a "play" setting with the child.

Piaget was a psychologist who identified the patterns of children's development. In investigating play, he identified three stages of play: exploratory play, symbolic (or fantasy) play, and games with rules. The stage of play which involves games with formal rules doesn't occur until about the age of 6 or older. We are expecting too much of preschool children if we ask them to conform to complex and abstract rules of play.

Early rule development starts when a child makes up his own rules for play. The rules usually make little sense to the adults, and they can change from minute to minute. Often it is this playing with making up rules which is more fun to the child than the game at hand. It is this kind of rule-making which can be frustrating to adults if they don't understand that what is going on mentally in the child is critical to future learning.

Often the first time a child plays a game that has rules is during fantasy play. "I'll be the doctor and you be the guy who just broke your leg. No, you gotta be limping or something and yelling." Eventually theses rules get more complex, and start resembling a TV script. Children try to get others to follow the "rules" of the script even if this means changing the rules every few minutes. Four and five-year-old children are fairly flexible and usually "go with the flow" unless an older person starts challenging their rules or holding them to a rule they've changed. "No, Daddy, you're not supposed to growl." "But you told me a minute ago that I was Superdog." Pause. "But Daddy, that was when we were on Tron. This is a different planet now and you've got to ...." This kind of fantasy play is critical to a child's development of language, intelligence, creativity, and social skills, and should be treated as a valuable part of childhood.

Towards the end of the symbolic or fantasy play phase a child starts to show an interest in games with more formal rules. Even when a child is ready to play a game with "real" or outside-imposed rules, the young child may get tired quickly and return to "made-up" rules or begin to engage in fantasy play or "get silly." This is a cue to the adult that the child is saying that she's interested in learning these games but she's had enough of a challenge for right now. Forcing a child to "finish the game" or "play right" will probably end up in frustration for both the adult and the child.

If the child expresses an interest in playing games with simple rules, we can break down the steps so that she can be successful in her goal. The key is that the child has to be the one to express interest in learning these, not that the adult imposes the desire on the child. Piaget has stated that the greatest motivator for learning is personal need and interest.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Describe your child's rule-following behavior in games.	Keep an anecdotal record of the child's game-playing behaviors (see pages 13-14). Use Form 5.
Count the number of times the child follows household rules vs. the number of times he does not.	Write down which household rules you want to attend to. Next to each rule, put a "+" when the child follows it, and an "o" when he does not obey the rule. Example: Holds my hand in parking lot. S M T W TH F S + o + + + o +
Count the number of times the child follows the rules in a given game.	Play the same game each time you observe. Count how many turns he follows the rules. For instance, the first turn he skips two spaces, so you do not count this turn. However he follows all rules the next four turns, so your count is four.

Strategies For Teaching How To Understand Rules

Strategy 1. State the rules clearly.

Young children need to know exactly what is expected of them. Rules should tell them specifically what behaviors are expected. Avoid vague rules such as "Play nice" or "Mind your parents." Try to tell the child as simply as possible the behaviors that you expect. "You are not allowed to hit your friends." It is then clear to the child what the rule is and when it is broken.

Shopping: "We are going in the store. Remember the two rules: (1) Stay beside your mother, and (2) Do not touch anything."

Playing Musical Chairs: "We're going to play Musical Chairs. When the music stops, sit down in an empty chair as fast as you can."

Strategy 2. Simplify rules to the smallest number possible.

When playing games or describing behavior rules, keep them simple and few. Children can remember three-step commands at five years of age. They should not have to remember more rules than they can keep in their memory at any one time. The smaller the number of rules, the easier it is for a child to remember them. If a game has many rules, consider carefully if the child is ready to learn to play it. If you still decide the game is OK for your child, reduce the rules to the essentials. Start with the elementary concepts of the game. As the child becomes skilled at playing, add a new rule.

Playing Musical Chairs: Simplify musical chairs to the most elementary concepts, walking around until the music stops and then sitting down in the closest chair. Use a clear explanation such as: "We're going to play musical chairs. When the music starts, you stand up and walk around the chairs. When the music stops, sit down in an empty chair as fast as you can."

Begin playing musical chairs without taking any chairs away so that children become used to stopping and starting on a signal. Vary the time that the children march around the chairs so that they pay attention to the signal itself, rather than the passage of time.

Leave all the chairs in until the child understands well. Before you take a chair away each time, say, "Now I'm going to take one chair away. There won't be enough chairs for everyone to sit on. When the music stops, if you don't have a chair, you're out of the game."

At mealtimes: "Remember we have three rules for the table: (1) One person talks at a time, (2) Do not talk with food in your mouth, (3) Eat all the food you put on your plate."

Playing a board game: Simplify the game as much as possible. For instance, if playing "Candyland," take out all of the double turn cards and ignore the special rules when you land on a picture rather than a color.

ACTIVITY

Get out a simple board game that is new for your child. Think about how you can eliminate some of the usual rules to make the game simple. Write down each of your new rules.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Strategy 3. Have the child state the rules to you or explain them to you.

The best way to learn something is to have to teach it to someone else. Have the child explain how to play a game to you. Have the child repeat the rules back to you. If the child cannot do this, prompt her with key words. Let her remember as much as she can independently.

Playing Hide-and-Seek:

Mom: "We're going to play hide and seek. How do we play?"
Child: "We hide and you look for us."
Mom: "Yes! That's it. But first I have to do what?"
Child: "Count!"
Mom: "Great! You're right. I count and you go hide and I'll find you."

Shopping:

Mom: "We're shopping. Remember the two rules? What are they?"
Child: "Don't touch anything."
Mom: "And ..."
Child: "Stay with Mom."
Mom: "That's right! You remembered them both and I'm proud of you! Don't touch anything and stay with Mom. Maybe if you can remember them while we shop, I'll get you a surprise in the store."

Strategy 4. Discuss the importance of rules.

Rules are important when we must all act the same. Explain to the child that when we play a game together, rules help us know how to play the game. It's fun to play with someone who follows the rules, but it's not fun to play with someone who does not follow the rules. Ask the child why we have rules. Rules help us all play together and enjoy the game.

Playing a board game: Explain the rules as simply as possible. Say, "We must all follow the rules so we can all have a turn and have fun playing."

Playing with a friend: "Remember the rules - take turns with toys and no hitting. We need those rules so we can play together and have a good time."

Strategy 5. Play simple games with your child.

Parents can play games with children that are typically played in preschool settings. The games are usually simple. They have two or three rules per game. The rules are simple and easy to remember. If your child has difficulty with games at school, find out what games are played at your child's school. Play them with your child at home to help him remember and learn the rules.

Group Games:
Musical Chairs
London Bridge
Duck, Duck, Goose
Farmer in the Dell
Ring Around the Rosy
Hide and Seek

Board Games:
Lotto
Bingo
Candyland
Memory

Summary

Five strategies for teaching understanding rules were discussed. To review, they were:

1) State the rules clearly
2) Simplify rules to the smallest number
3) Have child explain/state rules
4) Discuss the importance of rules
5) Play simple games with your child

Remember that rules are difficult for children to understand. Developmentally, young children are not ready to play games with complicated or numerous rules. Follow your child's lead. If he is frustrated or angry, do not force the game. Games should be fun. In time, with practice and maturity, he will be ready for these games.

Chapter 6

Continuing To Try When Frustrated

CHAPTER 6

CONTINUING TO TRY WHEN FRUSTRATED

Preschool children's attention spans are notoriously short, and adults need to adjust their expectations accordingly. However, some children seem to give up at the slightest provocation. These children can be assisted to learn some strategies to keep them going.

One of the major factors involved in attention to a task has to do with whether the child is the one who initiated, or started, the task or if someone else told the child to do it. If the child selected the task, it is likely that the child will continue with it for a longer period; that is, she will not quit because of frustration, as easily as she would if the task were imposed on her by another. This is the difference between internal versus outside motivation. Studies have demonstrated that children have much longer on-task behavior if the motivation and reinforcement come from the inside. Therefore, if you are going to try to increase a child's attention span and toleration to frustration, it is best to do so with a task which is enjoyable and stimulating to the child, and was selected by him.

However, there are some tasks which a child must finish even if he didn't choose the activity. The child is likely to have greater success with a task, for example, a household chore, if the child can choose which chore to do. The more the child "owns" the problem the more the desire to succeed. This is the idea behind, "Giving the child a choice when there is a choice." Intrinsic motivation is the most powerful reinforcer, and can be used to maintain a behavior such as staying at a difficult or frustrating task.

Another factor that affects the amount of time that a child will continue on a task is whether or not she perceives that her efforts will make a difference. If the child thinks the task is too difficult and no amount of trying is going to accomplish it, then she is unlikely to persist at the task. The child needs to feel that her efforts have an effect on her environment. If the child feels that, no matter how hard she tries, she cannot tie her shoes, then she will not continue to try.

Children need to be asked to persist on tasks that are difficult enough to be challenging but simple enough to accomplish!

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Count the number of times that your child gives up in frustration.	Use Form 1 or Form 2 to tally the occurrence. Count all day long or all morning long.
Count the number of times that your child keeps trying even though she was getting frustrated.	Use Form 1 or Form 2 to tally the occurrence. Count all day long or all morning long.
Time how long the child works at something before giving up.	Use Form 3. Indicate the type of task he or she is attempting; it may make a difference.
Outline the coping strategies that she shows as she tries again and again.	Use Form 5 to write a description.

Strategies For Teaching Your Child To Continue To Try

Strategy 1. Reward trying.

A very important strategy to increase persistence is to reinforce efforts, not just accomplishments. There are times when no matter how hard the child tries, he won't be successful. He needs to feel good about his efforts. The child needs to know that it is OK if he is sometimes not successful.

Working on a puzzle: "Boy, you really worked on that puzzle a long time. I'm proud of you for sticking to it for so long. Look at how much you did. I'll bet you feel good about yourself."

Playing a sport and losing the game: "I'm so proud of you. You tried very hard. I saw you try to block the other player from scoring. It's hard to lose, isn't it?" Reinforce her efforts. Point out what she did well. Acknowledge her feelings. Acknowledge the parts of the task that were successful.

Strategy 2. Reward independence.

The child needs to feel that his efforts are important. Encourage him to try things for himself. He needs to feel that it is important to do things for himself, so that he will continue to try to do things for himself. If he is motivated to be independent, he will be more likely to persist at learning new skills. Tell the child you are proud when he attempts new skills that lead to greater independence. Acknowledge his feelings about himself when he is able to say, "I did it myself!"

Getting dressed: The child wants to feel "big" to "do it all by myself!" He will work very hard to learn to button so that he can feel "big" and independent.

Finishing homework: Praise heavily the times the child can complete homework alone. "I'm proud you were able to do all that work by yourself!"

Strategy 3. Help the child to cope by breaking down the task into smaller steps.

Divide complicated or difficult tasks into smaller steps. The child can accomplish smaller steps and will continue until the task is complete. Another possibility is to divide the task into smaller steps and you do the most difficult parts and the child can complete the rest. Always try to have your child be the one to finish the task. If you start it and he completes the task, you can say "Wow, you did it!" If he starts and then needs help, the adult is the one who finishes and succeeds at the task. For example, if a child is learning to button, you start it through and let him finish pulling it out. Either way, you make the task manageable for the child.

Cleaning his room: If every toy the child owns is on the floor and you say "clean your room," the child will likely feel overwhelmed. Break it down. First, "Pick up all blocks"; when that is complete, praise that accomplishment. Next, "Pick up all the books." Again reinforce that part of the job. Then, "Pick up all of the cars and trucks." Continue until the job is finished. Then remind the child of what a big and difficult job he accomplished! "Wow! you picked up blocks, books, cars, trucks, and He-Man people all by yourself. Your room is clean! I'm so proud of you."

Getting dressed: If getting dressed completely is too big a job, break it down. "Put on your shirt." Praise. "Put on your pants." Praise. "I'll help with socks and shoes. Boy! Look at you. You're all dressed and you put your shirt and pants on all by yourself!"

ACTIVITY

a. Try to remember the last time you tried to do something which you found very difficult, but at which you were finally successful. What was that?

_____

Write down the steps you took to finally accomplish this task:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

b. Now describe the last time that you remember your child being frustrated by something at home. What was he trying to do?

_____

_____

How could you break this task down into smaller steps? List them.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Strategy 4. Teach the child to take breaks as a coping skill.

One coping technique the child should learn is to take breaks and come back to his job. If he can finish a small portion of the task, take a short break and then come back to it, he will be less likely to exceed his tolerance level. You must help him stop before he becomes too frustrated to be productive.

Doing homework: Help the child divide homework into parts. For example, if he is to write the letters of the alphabet, and he becomes fidgety or tense after copying only a few letters, suggest that he take a break and eat an apple after he finishes the letter "J."

Strategy 5. Explain why it is important to persist.

Very young children will not understand lengthy explanations. Keep the words brief. For example, "When you're trying to learn something new, some things are very hard to do at first. They can't be learned without a lot of practice. If you want to get really good at it, you'll have to keep trying until its gets easier."

"Some jobs you try to do take a long time and are very hard. But if the jobs are important to you or to (someone else), you have to keep trying to get them done. If you don't finish the job you'll feel badly about yourself and other people might be unhappy with you, too."

If a child becomes frustrated while trying to master new skills, these explanations can serve as encouragers also. Remind the child of something he could not do that he now does well. Emphasize how he has in the past tried and tried and is now very good at something. Emphasize how proud you are and how good he must now feel about himself.

Child trying to learn to ride a bike: Say, "This is new for you. Some things are hard to do when you first try them. I remember when you couldn't catch a ball. Do you? You used to try and try every day until you could do it. Now you catch balls very well. I'll bet if you try and try with your bike you will learn to ride it."

Trying to find a lost item: The child might be missing a shoe. "We need to keep looking. You need your soccer shoes so you can play in the game. I'll bet you'll be the fastest player there with your soccer shoes. Lets think of all the places it may be hiding and keep looking until we find it."

Strategy 6. Give choices.

A child will work longer on a task if he chooses the activity. The more a child "owns" a problem, the more the desire to succeed. If possible, especially when the task is an undesirable activity, give the child some sense of choice. The child can be given a choice of activities, a choice of times to do the activities, or a choice of the order in which they will do the activities. Don't give a choice when there is not one. If the child must pick up toys, give the choice of *when* it will be done, not *if* it will be done.

Cleaning the room: Give the child the option to pick up her toys first or take her clothes to the laundry room first.

Doing homework: Give the child a choice of two times to do homework.

ACTIVITY

Think of one activity/chore your child does not have a choice about doing:

_____

Now write down how you can build in some choice about how it's done.

_____

_____

Strategy 7. Remind the child of future events/consequences.

One of the difficulties very young children encounter in frustrating circumstances is an inability to predict or think of future events. They are bound to the present and they forget what the end product or consequence of their actions will be. Remind the child that when a task is complete there is a desirable outcome. "When you finish buttoning all of the buttons on your coat we can go outside."

Getting ready for bed: "When you have your pajamas on and your teeth brushed we can read a story."

Picking up toys: "When all the toys are put away, you may have ice cream." If she stops before the job is done say, "Do you remember what we're going to have when all the toys are put away? Yes, ice cream. Let's work real hard to put the toys away!"

Strategy 8. Teach the child to cope by asking for help.

Sometimes tasks are too difficult for a child. Sometimes the child is too tired or frustrated to continue. When the child has reached her limit she needs to be able to ask for help and not throw a tantrum. If the child does lose her temper, model how she is to get help. Have her repeat the question, "Would you please help me?" Ignore the tantrum. Sooner or later she will learn that the question gets your attention and help. The tantrum does not. Go through the problem-solving sequence of "How do I get help? I ask for it," each time she needs help. After repeated practice she may be more likely to ask for help than to become angry.

The child tries to get a drink alone from the refrigerator: The pitcher is too full and heavy and the cups are out of reach. If he begins to become angry, say "What do you need?" "I want a drink." "How do you think you could get it?" "I can't do it." "Do you need help?" "Yes." "How could you get help? Could you ask for help?" "Yes." "All you have to say is 'Mom, could you help me get a drink?' Try it!" "Mom, could you get me a drink?" "Why, yes! Of course I'd be glad to help you get a drink."

Child is trying to tie shoes: She is sitting on the floor, crying. Her shoes are untied. "What do you need?" "I can't tie my stupid shoes!" "Would you like help?" "Yes!" "How do you think you could get help?" "Mom will you help me tie my shoes?" "Yes I'd be glad to! When you ask nicely for my help, I like to help."

ACTIVITY

Observe when your child asks for help. Write down the exact words or behaviors he uses.

_____

_____

_____

Make a count of how often your child asks for help today. Reread pages 14-15 for assistance with this.

Date	Number of Times Child Asks for Help Appropriately

Strategy 9. Anticipate what the child will need to know and teach it first.

Sometimes the child is in the situation where a parent (or adult) will not be present to help with the component parts of the activity. If possible, anticipate what the skills are and teach them beforehand. At least give the child some exposure to the skills needed. He will feel more comfortable and more likely to try the task.

Going to a birthday party at the skating rink: If your child is invited to go to a skating party, help him learn to skate first. When he is with his peers he will be willing to try and will feel good about himself.

The child is having difficulty remembering a song's words for the school play: Ask the music teacher for a copy of the words. Practice them with your child before he has play practice. This extra practice will help him complete the task at play practice.

Strategy 10. Teach needed skills at stress-free times.

When you are trying to teach your child a new skill, try to keep frustration to a minimum. Practice at a time when you and the child are not operating under a time constraint. Children and parents become frustrated when in a hurry. This is not a good time to teach a skill and expect your child to persist. Teach and practice when there is plenty of time.

Another stressful time is after the child has become frustrated on a task. Once the child is upset and angry, he is not likely to be convinced to persist. Stop the task or activity. Come back to the task at a later time when the child is calm.

Tying shoes: Try to teach shoe-tying when there is time for practice. Do not teach when it is time for everyone to get dressed and to catch the school bus.

Finishing difficult homework: Marty was in tears. "There's too much math homework. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I'll never get this." Marty's mother acknowledged the child's feelings, saying, "I understand you get angry when the work seems too hard. I'd feel badly too if I didn't understand my homework." She knew that she needed to have Marty quit on a positive note, so she quickly helped him through two more problems. Then she said, "Let's put this away and take a short break. We'll try again after dinner." They came back to the task when Marty was calm, and his mother showed him how to work the problems correctly.

ACTIVITY

Think about the things that frustrate your child routinely. Name two skills that you believe he is ready to learn that will decrease this frustration. Determine a quiet, stress-free time to teach one of these skills.

1. He's frustrated because _____

   A skill that will help him is _____

   I will teach this on _____
   (date) (time of day)

2. He's frustrated because _____

   A skill that will help him is _____

   I will teach this on _____
   (date) (time of day)

Strategy 11. Assist the child only as much as necessary to accomplish the task.

Provide assistance to the child when needed, but only as much as is needed. Allow and encourage the child to do as much of the task as he can. When a child becomes frustrated, assist with the most difficult parts and encourage the child to continue with the rest of the task. Have the child finish the task with a personal success. Do not take over and finish the task for the child, or redo the task after he finishes. This would leave him feeling bad about his abilities.

Child is trying to brush very tangled hair: Help her with the most difficult tangles. Have her finish the task by brushing through her hair one final time after you finish. "There, look in the mirror. You did a good job and your hair looks nice now."

Child is trying to prepare his lunch: The peanut butter is difficult to spread. Spread it for him. Then have him put the sandwich together, and put it on his plate. Have him get out the apples and wash them. You cut them. Have him place them on the plate and serve them.

Strategy 12. Make tasks slightly challenging.

Children generally enjoy a challenge. They feel good about themselves if they complete something they think is difficult. The trick here is finding tasks that are difficult enough to be challenging but not so difficult as to be frustrating. If you can find this balance in difficulty, the child is likely to persist, and feel very good about himself in the process. Know your child and his abilities and limits before you ask him to complete a task.

Getting dressed: Your young child will feel very "big" if he can dress himself completely. If he doesn't have the skills to button or tie, have him dress himself some days when he can wear a T-shirt and velcro shoes.

Playing a new game: Pick a new game that uses some skills the child already has. If the child knows numbers and can count to 10, teach him to play the "WAR" card game. Do not teach this game if your child does not understand "more than" and "less than."

ACTIVITY

Fill in this chart with as many household chores as you can think of.

Chores that are too difficult to attempt right now	Chores that he could do with some help or training	Chores that are easily accomplished right now

Strategy 13. Model persistence.

Act as a model when you try something difficult. Talk out loud. Let the child hear the process. Ask for his help. "I need to find my keys. What can I do?"

Looking for a sitter: "I can't find anyone to babysit next week. I've tried four girls and they're all busy. I'm getting very frustrated. It's important, so I'll keep trying. I'm sure tired of calling." Later, "Good for me. I kept trying and I finally found a babysitter."

ACTIVITY

Describe one instance in which you modeled persistence. What words did you use to describe your behavior out loud?

_____

_____

_____

Summary

Thirteen strategies for teaching persistence were discussed. To review, they were:

1) Reward trying
2) Reward independence
3) Break down task into steps
4) Teach the child to cope by taking breaks
5) Explain why it is important to persist
6) Give choices
7) Remind child of future events/consequences
8) Teach child to cope by asking for help
9) Anticipate what child needs and teach it first
10) Teach at a stress-free time
11) Assist the child only as much as necessary
12) Make tasks slightly challenging
13) Model persistence

The most important motivation to stick to a task is the feeling that what you do will make a difference. The child should experience success if he is to continue trying. He needs lots of encouragement for his efforts. He needs to know you're proud of him. He needs to feel good about himself and his ability to accomplish things. Allow for much practice and stress the child's competence. Focus attention on what he can do and he will be more willing to try other, harder tasks.

Chapter 7

Getting Ready On Time

CHAPTER 7

GETTING READY ON TIME

Children's time sense is very subjective; that is, it isn't tied to a clock but to what is happening to them. "For example, if two preschool children leave a classroom at the same time and one reaches the slide, which is closer to the school, at the same time as the other reaches the swings, which are farther away, they both believe that even though they started and stopped at the same time, the child who got the swings ran for a longer period of time because he ran farther than the child who ran to the swings," (Hohman, Banet, & Weikart, 1979).

In addition to not having a fully developed perspective of the passage of time, children often don't have the same motivation as an adult to leave at a certain time. Schedules are very much an adult invention and the young child, who has difficulty taking on the "role" of another, may be unable to understand that if Daddy is late one more time this month the boss is going to have something to say about it. The child's own needs are uppermost in her thoughts, so instead of hurrying to get her socks on, the most important thing in the world might be to find the truck she wanted to show to Thomas. In these cases, it's not that the child doesn't care about her father getting upset. She's not even aware of the passage of time and the coming deadline. Even though adults can't change the child's basic understanding (or misunderstanding) of time, we can provide young children with some very specific supports for knowing when things need to begin or to be finished. These methods have to be very concrete, such as using signals for starting or stopping an action, establishing a regular routine which is identifiable to the child, and giving children the aids by which they can plan and reflect upon happenings. Often creativity on the part of the adult and involvement of the child (i.e., intrinsic motivation) in the designs of the plan are what contribute to success of a time program.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Count how many times your child is ready to go.	Place ten strips of tape on the door to see as you leave the house. If the child was ready to go, move the tape to the window on the door. If he was not ready on time, move a strip of tape to the top of the door. At the end of the day, record the number of times "ready" and "not ready" on Form 1.
Time how long it takes your child to get dressed in the morning.	Time from the point that you tell him to wake up until the child is finished putting on clothes, socks and shoes. Use Form 3.
Count how many times your child is ready for dinner on time. This means he has completed whatever you have asked him to do and sits down to dinner at the same time as other family members.	Hang a calendar on the refrigerator. When he is ready for dinner on time, put a check on the calendar for that day.

Strategies For Teaching Children To Get Ready On Time

Strategy 1. Define what you mean by "ready."

Sometimes children have a different concept of what's "ready" than their parents do. Break the task down into steps and be very exact in explaining what the child must do. "Getting ready means doing all the things that it takes to get dressed and have everything you need to take in a pile waiting to go. That means your shirt, pants, belt, socks and shoes are on. Then you must brush your teeth, comb your hair, and put on your coat." "Being ready

for bed means pajamas are on and teeth are brushed." Have the child repeat. Say "When you are ready for bed you have..." Pause and have him add "pajamas on and teeth brushed." If he cannot remember both parts, prompt, saying "and teeth..." Pause for him to add "brushed." For getting-ready routines that are practiced each day, use the same definitions each time. If being ready for bed means "pajamas on and teeth brushed," don't say "You need to get ready for bed. Go wash your face, brush your teeth, put on pajamas, and find a book to read."

When you're going somewhere in the car: For a child that can follow a four-part direction, say "Get ready to go. Put on socks and shoes, comb your hair, and put your coat on."

When having dinner: For a child that can follow a two-part direction, say "Get ready for dinner. Wash your hands and come to the table."

ACTIVITY

Write down what you mean when you tell your child to get ready at the following times. Then see if your husband/wife agrees with your answers.

Get Ready for Dinner: _____

_____

_____

Get Ready for Bed: _____

_____

_____

Get Ready for School: _____

_____

_____

Strategy 2. Ask the child to do only a few steps at a time.

With a complex task, a young child may not be able to remember all of the steps. Give the child only one or two steps at a time. Reinforce the child for these intermediate steps, then

give one or two more. It is better to break a task into three parts and have the child experience success, than to give six directions and have the child become frustrated. For your convenience, tell the child to do one thing and then come show you. It's hard to leave what you're doing every few minutes to go check on him. This gives the child the responsibility of checking with you for the next step.

> *Getting ready for school:* Start with "Get dressed and put on shoes and socks." When this is complete, "Eat breakfast, then brush your teeth." When this is complete, "Get your lunch and backpack." Reinforce each step.
>
> *Getting ready to go in the car:* Start with "Put on your socks and shoes and then come show me." When this is complete then, "Comb your hair and come show me." When this is complete then, "Find your coat and hat and put them on. Tell me when you're done." Later, "Boy, you did a good job getting ready. You did five things! You put on your shoes, your socks, your hat, your coat, and you brushed your hair! You are really ready to go!"

Strategy 3. Use consistent routines to signal activities.

Routines make children comfortable. They know what to expect. They have an idea about what to do next, and they may feel less of a need to balk. "This is the way things are always done and there is no need to argue." It was stressed earlier that consistent directions should be used to define being ready. Doing the same things in the same order each time will help the child to learn what is involved in being ready for bed or school. Repeated practice aids in learning a new skill.

Pick one or two important and frequently used "getting ready" times such as bed and school. Decide on a simple and consistent way to approach each. Follow that approach each time the child gets ready for bed or school.

> *Getting ready for bed*: Have the child do these activities in the same order each night. Give directions in the same way each night.
>
> 1) Take a bath
> 2) Brush teeth
> 3) Pick and read a book
> 4) Get a drink of water
> 5) Go to bed

Strategy 4. Make a chart of activities that need to be accomplished.

To help the child remember a long series of items or activities that involve being ready for an event, make a chart with words (or pictures for non-readers) of everything needed. This provides the child with concrete evidence that everything is done. He knows that, "When every item is checked, I'm ready."

Getting ready for school: Make a chart with the necessary activities in the correct order.

1) A clock to show wake-up time
2) Get dressed
3) Eat breakfast
4) Brush teeth
5) Get backpack
6) Leave

Have the child check off each one in order as they are finished. Getting ready on time for five days could mean a special treat. The child can visually see how he is doing.

Getting ready for bed: Make a picture chart that shows teeth brushing, picking out clothes for the next day, taking a bath, reading a story. As the child finishes each activity he or she can cross it off. When all activities are finished, it's time to go to bed.

Getting ready for swimming class: Make a picture chart with the items that the child needs for swimming: suit, goggles, towel, and pool card. The child can check off each item so that she has everything together before she needs to leave for the pool.

ACTIVITY

Make a reminder chart for one getting-ready event. Explain the chart to your child today, and help your child use it for the next week.

Getting-Ready Chart for _____

Activities to be listed _____

_____

Child's response was _____

Strategy 5. Use questions to help the child learn to evaluate when he (or something) is ready.

Guide him through a series of questions to determine if he is ready. Include each step that you defined (in Strategy #1). After a while help him ask himself these same questions to evaluate his state of "readiness." Use the same words and same sequence each time. This will help him remember what to ask himself. Practice this skill when you need to be ready and have a time limit, such as going to school. Allow for more relaxed practice without time pressures, such as getting ready to play a game. Practice the sequence when getting an inanimate object ready, such as getting the table ready for dinner. The sequence of questions stresses the idea that being ready involves a set of activities and is complete when we have "all we need" to complete the task at hand. This technique helps the child begin to reflect on his/her performance and helps him/her begin to self-evaluate.

Bedtime: Ask your child, "Are you ready for bed?" "Yes." "Do you have pajamas on?" "Yes." "Have you brushed your teeth?" "Yes." "Good for you! You put on pajamas and brushed your teeth— you are ready for bed. What a great job. Come and let me give you a hug." If the answer to any of the questions is "No," say, "You're not ready. Go and brush your teeth now. Then you will be ready." Repeat the above sequence after his teeth are brushed.

When preparing dinner: Ask your child the following questions:
"Let's get the table ready. What do we need? Right, plates."
"Now, what do we need?" "Napkins."
"Yes! Let's get them. Are we ready yet? What else do we need?" "Spoons and forks."
"Great. Let's put them on the napkins. Are we ready now?" "Yes."
"But what are we going to eat?" "Food."
"Yes, we need food on the table. Are we ready now?" "Yes."
"Yes, we have plates, napkins, spoons, forks, and food. Now we are ready."

When preparing for school:
"Are you ready?" "Yes."
"Do you have your backpack?" "Yes."
"Do you have your homework?" "Yes."
"Do you have lunch money?" "Yes."
"Do you have all you need to go to school?" "Yes."
"Yes, you are ready. You have your backpack, homework, lunch money, and coat. You have all you need. You are ready."

As the child becomes more skilled, say, "What do you need to ask yourself?" Assist as necessary to get the child through the series of questions. Let him do as much as possible independently.

Strategy 6. Make time limits concrete.

Time is a very hard concept for children. Children need very concrete examples of time, such as an hourglass or a timer. These aids give the child a visual representation of "how much" is 15 minutes. The timer makes an activity more fun. It's a game to race the timer. "Can you be ready for bed before the timer rings?" If a timer is not readily available, use counting. "I'm going to count and see how long it takes you to get your coat and hat on. Wow! You made it before I got to 20."

Bedtime: "I'm setting the timer for 15 minutes. I want you to be ready for bed before the bell rings." This is another time when you could use a sticker chart to mark progress.

For birthday party: For long-term getting ready, as for a party, make a paper chain. Write a different task on each link of the chain.

Address invitations
Send invitations
Buy party supplies
Make cake

Have the child cut off one link each day and do that activity. When all links are gone, it's his birthday and he's ready! The child can see how many links are left until the desired event.

Holiday season: Place rows of wide adhesive tape on the refrigerator. Write an activity on each strip of tape. Have child remove a strip and do the activity that day.

Strip 1: Bake cookies. Strip 2: Dad's present. Strip 3: Color picture. Strip 4: Wrap present. Strip 5: Decorate the room.

Strategy 7. Help the child get things ready in advance.

Some getting-ready activities are very complex and have many parts. As much as possible, help the child get things ready in advance. For example, getting ready for school involves several components that can be prepared ahead of time. Clothes can be picked out the night before with both shoes placed next to the bed. Backpacks can be packed the night before. For a high-pressure/tension time with a time limit, such as going to school, have as much ready beforehand as possible. This makes getting ready on time more likely to be a success for the child.

Getting ready for school the night before: Help the child pick out clothes; pack the school bag; make lunch or set out lunch money.

When preparing to go on a trip: Have the child pick out car activities to stay busy while traveling. "We're leaving tomorrow. Go now and find two toys that you want to take in the car. Put them in the car."

ACTIVITY

Check which things cause a panic more often than you wish.

____ One shoe missing

____ Clothes don't match

____ Clothes don't fit

____ As you walk out the door, the child says, "I forgot _____."

Which of these things could be eliminated by planning the night before? Circle them.

Strategy 8. Give the child advance notice when he will need to get ready for something.

Children have trouble switching from one activity to another. Give them time to prepare to have to stop their present activity and begin another.

At bedtime: "You have about 10 minutes left to play before you have to get ready for bed. I'm setting the timer for 10 minutes. When it rings, you'll need to get ready for bed."

When a friend is over to play: "Jenny can stay here for 15 more minutes before her mother is coming to pick her up. When the clock in your room shows 4:15 (draw the numerals to match with a digital clock) it will be time to begin cleaning up."

When leaving for an appointment: "We're leaving to go to the dentist in 10 minutes. When the sand runs down to the bottom of the hourglass it will be time to leave."

When leaving a favorite place: "We have to go home soon. You can swim for 5 more minutes."

Strategy 9. Talk about the importance of being ready on time.

Explain to the child why it is important to you for him to be on time. "When we get ready to go somewhere, everyone has to get themselves ready. If I think someone is getting ready and they're really not, it makes me very mad because it takes more time and then we're late." Brainstorm about what might happen if everyone were late. Let the child get silly and exaggerate to make your point. Sometimes ridiculous stories are easy to remember. "What would happen if everyone were late? What if all the workers at McDonald's never got ready on time? We would never be able to eat McNuggets. We would never get french fries. They wouldn't be ready to fix them for us. Oh No! No more french fries in the whole world because the waitress and cook didn't get ready for work on time. It's very important for people to be ready on time, isn't it?"

Stress the importance of being ready by rewarding the child with praise when he or she is ready on time. Tell him how happy, proud, and pleased you are. Record progress on a chart. Give a smiley-face sticker for each time he or she is ready for school on time. Five stars mean a treat, etc.

> *At bedtime:* "It makes me happy when you get ready on time. I'm so pleased you got ready for bed that I'll let you choose an extra book for me to read."

Summary

Nine strategies for teaching getting ready on time were discussed. To review, they were:

1) Define getting ready
2) Ask the child to do only a few steps at a time
3) Use consistent routines
4) Make a chart of activities
5) Use questions to evaluate
6) Make time limits concrete
7) Help the child get things ready in advance
8) Give advance notice
9) Discuss the importance of getting ready

Be very positive and be patient. Some adults still have trouble getting ready on time. Planning activities and budgeting time so that all things are done by a certain time is a complex skill. Encourage your child as he struggles with this task. Stress the parts he did right and let him know you are pleased with his progress.

Chapter 8

Refusing Requests Politely

CHAPTER 8

REFUSING REQUESTS POLITELY

Young children see the world quite differently than adults. They feel their own feelings very strongly and have to learn over time that other people have different needs and motivations. When your demands or the demands of some situations interfere with their desires, they may become confused or angry, or they may simply ignore your needs. In any case, they are unlikely to respond politely. For example, if a child is enjoying television with the family, it is beyond his belief that you want to end this nice time with a demand for bedtime. He's having fun, and knows you are too. It makes no difference to him now that if he doesn't go to bed soon, he will be exhausted in the morning. In the evening, the needs and demands of the morning are too distant. Therefore, he may well resort to angry refusal.

The young child's anger is initially expressed non-verbally. Temper tantrums are not uncommon for even 4- and 5-year-olds. It's important for children to learn to use words when angry because it allows us to understand them better, and also because using the words even helps us to behave more appropriately.

In summary, it's very important for a child to learn to express his feelings about a negative situation, but it takes learning through practice and guidance to be able to do so. This is hard because it is difficult for a young child to keep two conflicting ideas in mind at the same time. For example, someone tells him to do one thing and then another person tells him to do something which conflicts with that, or someone tells him to do something now which has benefits beyond the child's memory of the moment. In addition, the young child hasn't acquired the words to express emotions or the techniques by which to deal with social conventions.

Social conventions are rules which differ from culture to culture. These social rules require a special kind of learning. They must be taught very directly. As such, they require a lot of training to get the behavior going and reinforcement to keep it going. Periodic reminders will probably be necessary to continue behavior over time.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Count the times when your child replies rudely (or angrily) to your request.	Use paper clips or pennies as described on pages 14-15 to keep count. Record the number of times on Form 1.
Count the times when your child explains without anger that he cannot do what you ask him to do.	This behavior may be infrequent. Therefore, you need to record all day long. Keep Form 2 on the refrigerator and mark it each time the child refuses politely.

Teaching Strategies for Refusing Requests Politely

Strategy 1. Define behavior desired.

Saying no politely means telling someone why you can't or don't want to do something in a way that doesn't hurt their feelings or make them mad. It means using words and a voice that says that there is a good reason why you are saying no. Your child needs to know that there are ways to say no without misbehaving. Before you teach a child to say "No" politely, decide exactly what that means. Tell the child simply and clearly what you expect. It may be "No, Thank you," "No, Sir," or plain "No" in a polite tone of voice. Ask your child to tell you back exactly what he thinks you want him to do. Tell the child he does not have to agree with you, but he must tell you so in a nice way.

While playing with blocks: You tell the child, "Put the blocks away if you're done with them." The child replies rudely, "No, didn't you see I just got them out?" An appropriate answer to the child might be, "You do not have to be finished or put them away yet. You must say 'No, I'm not finished' in a nice voice. You try it." Reinforce his efforts.

While eating lunch: "Are you finished yet?" "No, I'm still eating my sandwich." "Thank you! I like the way you told me no. It makes me happy when you talk nice to me."

ACTIVITY

State exactly the words and manner by which you expect your child to indicate disagreement:

_____

_____

Strategy 2. Discuss the importance of saying "No" politely.

Sit down as a family and discuss the social rules that are important in your family. If Mom doesn't care about saying "please" and Dad does and they both act accordingly, the child is going to get confused by the mixed messages. Agree among the family members what are the important social conventions that your family will obey. Tell the child why you want him to respond politely. "We don't talk in a way that will hurt someone's feelings or make them sad." Explain that when the child says "no" in a way that is misbehaving it makes you angry. Discuss whether or not you want to listen to or do what someone says if they say it in an impolite manner. Talk about how much more likely you are to be agreeable or let the child refuse if it is said in a nice tone of voice.

Two children playing: When your child responds to another child impolitely, help him to recognize how this affects his friend. For instance:

Charlie: "Let's play this game."
John: "No, that's stupid!"
Mom: "Charlie, do you like it when he screams at you?"
Charlie: "No."
Mom: "John, how do you think you could tell him, 'No I don't want to play that game now' without hurting his feelings?"
John: "No, I don't want to play that game now."
Mom: "Charlie, did you like that?"
Charlie: "Yes."
Mom: "Is it better when John doesn't call your game stupid?"
Charlie: "Better."
Mom: "Now can you two find another game you both want to play?"

While eating dinner: The child screams and becomes angry and refuses a certain food. Mom might explain, "I don't like it when you talk to me that

way. It makes me angry. It is important in our house to talk nicely to each other. I'd like you to try saying that again nicely."

Praise and comment on polite "Noes" when they occur. Make sure the child is noticed and gets your attention when he responds politely, not just when he refuses impolitely.

ACTIVITY

Identify three incidents when you redirected your child's negative response:

1. When he/she said or did: _____

   I said: _____

   and my child's response was: _____

2. When he/she said or did: _____

   I said: _____

   and my child's response was: _____

3. When he/she said or did: _____

   I said: _____

   and my child's response was: _____

Strategy 3. Consistently require the child to use the correct behavior.

Young children can't change every behavior in a very short period of time. So, you may want to work on saying "Thank you" until that is ingrained in the child's behavior and then move on to "No, thank you." Keep the list of rules you are currently working on very short or the child will become frustrated and angry. But once you introduce a behavior rule, require that behavior consistently.

If sometimes the child can scream and other times you expect a polite "No," the child will become confused. If the phrase "No, thank you" is required, then always expect that phrase. When the child screams, tell him he may say "No," but he may not scream. Require him to use the acceptable phrase.

Remember, if the child screams he is probably experiencing some intense emotion, such as frustration or anger. Be sure to acknowledge the feelings, but require the desired behavior.

> *At mealtime*: "Do you want broccoli?" "No! I hate it!" "You do not have to eat it. You must tell me nicely. How would you do that?" Silence. "Can you say, 'No, thank you.' It makes me feel good when people talk nicely to me."
>
> *At the mall*: Mother asks the child, "Do you want to go to another store?" The child whines back, "No! I'm tired!" "I understand you're tired. You may not whine or scream at me. Try again." The child repeats, "No, I'm tired," in a normal voice. "That's better. I like it when you speak nicely to me. It makes me want to do as you wish. If you're tired we'll go home now."

Strategy 4. Model the correct behavior.

Children are excellent observers. They copy what they see us do. We can tell them to refuse politely, and be mindful of others' feelings. They will not learn that unless they see us doing just that. Be polite when you refuse your child's requests. Say "No, thank you" to him.

> *Mealtime:* The child asks for more of something, but it is all gone. You reply, "I'm sorry, but I can't give you more this time. It's all gone."
>
> *Watching TV:* Child to father: "Do you want me to turn the TV?" Father: "No, thank you, but I appreciate your offer."
>
> *Refusing a request:* "I know you would really like to go, but you cannot this time." Acknowledge feelings and politely refuse.

ACTIVITY

Record three times you modeled the behavior:

What Was Going On	What I Said/Modeled	My Child's Response
1.		
2.		
3.		

Strategy 5. Role play situations where the child would need to say "No."

There are a lot of situations when it is necessary for a child to say "No." Talk about them with your child. "Sometimes you don't want to or can't do what people want you to do. Sometimes you need to tell them 'No' without hurting their feelings or making them mad. Maybe you have different people asking you to do different things."

Role play what the child would say in such situations. Take parts, and trade parts. Discuss how each person feels when they get a polite "No" and when they get an impolite "No."

When two people want you to do something at the same time: For instance, when Mother tells the child not to leave the table until he has finished his meal, and Father tells him to go pick up his toys, he must tell Father "No, I can't. Mother said to stay here."

You are invited to play with two friends at the same time: You must tell one person "No" so that their feelings are not hurt.

Summary

Five strategies for teaching saying "No" politely were discussed. To review, they were:

1) Define behavior desired
2) Discuss the importance of saying "No" politely
3) Consistently require correct behavior
4) Model correct behavior
5) Role play

The most powerful technique for teaching politeness is presenting a good model. Be polite in response to your child. Require that she does the same. Be sure to give lots of praise when she is polite. Remember that behaviors that get attention increase. If your child gets your approval when she is polite, she will be polite more often.

Chapter 9

Following Directions

CHAPTER 9

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

There are many factors involved in following directions. One factor involves the cognitive aspects: understanding and remembering the directions. A second factor deals with motivation: wanting to carry out the actions. A third factor has to do with having the physical capability to carry out the directions. All of these factors are interrelated, but will be dealt with separately here.

The Learning Accomplishment Profile-Diagnostic Edition (a diagnostic test for pre-schoolers) indicates that 30 months is the average age at which children can follow commands that have two parts. By the age of 5, children can follow three-step commands. This sequence depends on how complicated the tasks are and other factors. Therefore, directions given to young children should not have more than two or three parts.

> A two-part command would be: "Put your truck away and get your coat."
>
> A three-part command would be: "Finish your breakfast, then go get your coat and bring your lunch box."

There are several psychological principles which affect a person's ability to remember (Kagan and Haveman, 1968). One is the child's familiarity with the content of what is to be remembered. If a child is told to get her coat, and she has to get it fairly often, she is more likely to remember to do so than if she is told to get something unusual, for example, to get the cat to take to the veterinarian.

Another psychological principle is that it is easier to remember something that is meaningful. For example, it is easier for a child to follow directions that involve common everyday activities than abstract directions. Therefore, it will be more difficult for a child to "color the circle blue and put an x on the square," than to "go wash your hands and sit down at the dinner table."

It is also important to recognize that it is easier to learn something by logic than it is by rote memory. Once a young child understands the logic of something, it usually becomes easier to follow the directions.

Another psychological principle presented here is that no child can remember and act upon information if he or she isn't paying attention. It will be difficult to attend to directions if there are a lot of other things going on (such as the dog barking, etc.). Children may be better able to focus their attention if they are asked to look at you and say back to you the instructions you've just given.

These are some of the psychological principles which affect how easy or hard it is to remember sequences of information, but this knowledge won't help if the child is not motivated to accomplish the tasks. Even if the command has only two or three steps, is meaningful and relevant to the child, and was explained when child was attentive, the child has to want to accomplish the tasks.

Sometimes children are motivated when they identify why it is important to accomplish a task. It might be that by following the directions the child will experience a pleasurable outcome. For example, the child might be motivated when he hears, "After you put your blocks away and get your coat we can go to the park."

But sometimes we must ask children to follow directions when there is no obvious reward to them. In those situations, it might be necessary to combine the learning principles described in Chapter 3 with the developmental principles in this chapter. As we have said earlier, if children can make choices it will be easier for them to act in a way that is satisfactory to both of you.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Count how many times the child completes the directions you give him.	Give the child five directions each day. Use Form 1 or Form 2 to record how many times he follows these directions.
Time how long it takes the child to complete the directions.	Use this method for directions that you give frequently. Time the same directions each day. Start timing when you complete the directions and stop timing when the child completes the last part of the directions. Use Form 3 to record your time daily.
Time how long it takes the child to begin to follow the directions after you tell him to.	After you tell the child to do something, start timing and see how long it takes him to begin to do what you said. Stop timing as soon as the child begins to follow the directions. Use Form 3.
Count each step in a direction that the child follows.	Determine how many steps you should give the child. For each step in the direction, make a box. Put a 1 in the box if he completes this step and a 0 if he does not.
Count the number of steps completed.	Construct a behavior chart for your child. List the steps to complete and mark them off when finished.
Compare the complexity of your directions over time.	Tape-record yourself talking with your child each Monday. Listen to the recording and write down two directions that you gave your child. Look to see how the directions change over time. Do they increase in number of steps to the directions?

Strategies For Teaching Your Child How To Follow Directions

Strategies 1-7 are aimed at the cognitive aspects of following directions. They deal with the child's ability to understand and carry out the directions. Strategies 8-12 deal with the motivational aspects of following directions. They deal with the child's willingness to follow the directions.

Strategy 1. Have your child's attention.

In order for your child to hear and follow a direction, he or she must be attending to you when you give the direction. Some children are more distractible than others. Check and see if there are other distractors, such as the TV being on, before you give a direction. Cue the child that a direction is coming. "I'm going to give you directions now. I want you to listen." Have your child look at you. Get down to the same eye level. Speak only to your child. Do not give directions while you are doing something else, such as reading the paper. Give your child your attention, and make sure you have his, when directions are given.

At bedtime: Turn off the TV. Get down on your child's level. Make eye contact and say, "It's time to brush your teeth. I want you to go upstairs and brush your teeth now." Praise generously when your child brushes his teeth.

When it's time to leave a friend's house: Get on the child's level. Perhaps touch her arm. Say, "Look at me. I'm going to tell you what to do. We must go now. Find your shoes and socks and put them on." Be sure to reinforce her for following directions. Say, "Wow! you found your socks and shoes really fast!"

Strategy 2. Make directions concrete and precise.

Directions should be in language your child understands. They should describe exactly what to do. A child knows what to do if you say, "Pick up the blocks." That may not be as clear if you say, "Clean your room." It is easier for your child if you give several short concrete statements, rather than one vague statement.

On a trip to the library: Say, "We are going to the library. In the library there is no running. You need to pick a book and sit at the table to read it." For a young child this may be too many directions at once. You may need to repeat parts of it when appropriate. When you enter the library, say, "Now go pick a book." After the book is chosen, say, "Now, sit at this table to read it." These directions give a child a much clearer understanding of what to do than saying, "We're going to the library and I want you to be good." Be sure to reinforce each direction followed.

Getting ready for school: Say, "I want you to get ready for school. Get your books, your lunch, and your coat." Again, as in the previous example, these directions may be broken into parts for younger children. Reinforce for any direction followed. Provide reminders for those not followed.

ACTIVITY

Rewrite these directions to make them more concrete and precise.

A. "Set the table" _____

_____

B. "Go outside and play" _____

_____

C. "Pick up your clothes" _____

_____

D. "Be good for the babysitter" _____

_____

Strategy 3. Have your child repeat the directions to you.

Once you give your child directions, have her repeat them back. If she forgets or gets distracted in the middle of a series of directions (as in getting ready for school), use questions to have her think for herself what she is to be doing now.

Getting ready for bed: Get your child's attention by saying, "It's bedtime. You need to get your pajamas on, brush your teeth, and pick a book. That's three things. Can you remember them all? You tell me now, you are to . . ." Have your child repeat the directions. Prompt with one or two words if necessary. Reinforce by saying, "Great! You remembered all three! Now, let's see if you can do them!"

Picking up toys: Get your child's attention by saying, "It's time to pick up the toys. I want you to pick up the blocks, the dolls, and the books. What are you supposed to do?" Have your child repeat the directions. Reinforce her

efforts. If after the blocks are up, she begins to play with the dolls, use questions to remind her and have her think for herself. Say, "What are you supposed to do?" If she says, "I don't know," say, "You were supposed to pick up what?" (Blocks) "Yes! and you did a good job with the blocks. Now what else are you supposed to pick up? Think hard! Do you remember?" (Dolls) "And what else?" Point to the books. (Books) "Yes! Blocks, and dolls, and books."

Strategy 4. Give only a few steps at a time.

Children have a hard time remembering several commands at once. Most 5-year-olds can only remember three-step commands if the steps are related. Not all 5-year-olds can remember three-step directions. If you find your child having difficulty, back up and give fewer steps and gradually increase the complexity.

The number of steps to be followed also is affected by familiarity with the steps on the task. If a child follows the same routine for getting ready for school, it will be easier for him to follow three-step directions related to that routine. It will be harder for a child to follow three-step directions for an unfamiliar routine, such as "Get the dog leash, find the dog, and go to the car so we can go to the vet's." A general rule of thumb is, the newer the activity, the fewer and the simpler the directions need to be.

At mealtime: Give the child directions for helping to set the table. Start with one step, for example, "Put the butter on the table." As the child becomes more skilled, add one more, for example, "Put the plates and napkins on the table." If the child has difficulty, back up and make the directions less complex.

Always reinforce directions followed. If the child follows two of three directions, do not ignore the two correct and say "You forgot to...." Praise the correct ones first. Gently remind or question about the one forgotten. Place emphasis on the successes, not the failures.

Strategy 5. Post reminders for everyday jobs.

For a series of directions that are always the same, such as "getting ready" or "what to put in the school bag" routines, make a reminder poster or chart. This will help your child remember all of the steps of the directions. Then he or she can check off steps completed.

Packing school bag: To avoid the morning rush, make a chart with all the things that need to be taken to school. It may contain pictures of books, pencils, lunch box, homework, etc. Have the child check off each item each morning. Five days with all items remembered may mean a special treat—an extra TV show on Friday night, for example.

Strategy 6. Play "listening-and-following-directions" games.

Play simple following-directions games to help the child with the skills of listening and following directions. Make the directions 2- and 3- and 4-step directions.

At Home: Play traditional "Simon Says" with directions such as:

"Blink you eyes, then clap your hands."
"Stand on one foot and hop around."
"Close your eyes, clap your hands, then turn around."
"Touch your knee, then foot, then head, then eye."

When traveling in the car: Make a "following-directions" game on index cards. Put 2-, 3-, and 4-step directions on cards. Make them so that they can be performed while sitting. Read directions only once and see if your child can follow them. The directions could be:

"Blink your eyes, clap your hands."
"Touch your eye, then nose, then ear."
"Clap three times, count to 10."
"Stamp your feet, touch your elbow."
"Pick up left foot, snap right fingers."
"Stick out tongue, pull ear, wave hand."
"Raise right hand, touch left eye, clap five times."

Strategy 7. Rehearse new or unfamiliar directions.

If a parent is going to give a child new information, he or she might want to "rehearse" it with the child so the child will be more familiar with the content when it is relevant. For example, you could say, "Tomorrow you won't go to day care. You will stay the day and the night at Jane's house. You have to leave earlier, so you will have to hurry in the morning. When the special timer goes off it will be time to put away your toys and bring your backpack down to the kitchen with you." If a routine is going to change, practice the new directions. Prepare your child for the change. Some prior knowledge and practice will make your child more familiar with what is coming, and the directions will be more meaningful at the time they are needed.

When there's a change in schedule: Prepare the child by explaining, "Tomorrow you will be picked up at school by your father. You are going to spend the weekend with him. We'll need to get up earlier than usual. We'll need to pack your bag tomorrow morning." The next morning, when you give the directions for the change in morning routine, your child will understand what is coming and may be able to follow the directions more easily.

When your child starts a new team sport: Practice with new sports terms. For example, if the child is beginning basketball, teach and practice dribbling, shooting, and finding the free-throw line. When the coach gives directions, they will be more meaningful and more likely to be followed!

Strategy 8. Explain the importance of following directions.

When important directions are given, explain their importance. Children are often more willing to comply if they understand why something needs to be done. If you can't think of a good reason why the child should do the task, then reconsider whether or not you should give the directions.

Picking up pictures: Say, "Please pick up your pictures. They might get torn if the dog walks on them."

Taking a bath: Explain, "If you want to have time to watch the Cosby show, you need to take a bath now."

Cleaning up a mess: Say, "You need to clean up your mess. I'm having a friend visit and I want the house neat." Later you can say, "Thank you for helping. It made me feel good to have a clean house for my friend's visit."

Strategy 9. Make directions meaningful.

As much as possible, directions should be relevant and have meaning for the child. This can help the child understand the directions better and be more willing to follow them. You can assist young children to follow the logic of an action. You can make this into a game or a story to keep your child's attention. For example, you could say, "There's this boy who lives in this house. His mom has to go to work and he has to go to school. What does this boy have to do before he leaves his house? What does he do first, put on his coat or sit down at the table to have breakfast?"

If you tell your child to do something, for instance, to pick up his papers before his younger sister gets them, and he doesn't care about saving the papers, he is not likely to do it. If these are papers he is saving or has worked hard on, he will more likely pick them up. (Sometimes, of course, the papers simply have to get picked up, regardless of the reason why.)

Doing chores: You might say, "I know you are saving your allowance money for a new ball. You have to finish your household job in order to get your allowance. Go and take out the trash, and empty the cat litter." Linking the chores to what the child wants to buy makes the directions relevant for the child. It is now very meaningful and important for this child to complete the tasks.

If the child is learning a new skill and the words are unfamiliar, he will not follow the directions because they will be meaningless. You need to change the directions or teach the new terms first.

Strategy 10. Follow a less desired behavior with a more desired behavior.

The child will be more willing to follow directions if there is a desirable consequence. Sometimes the consequences are naturally reinforcing. For example, "When I finish my homework, I get to play." or, "If I get my coat and hat, we'll go to the park." We are all more likely to do something if we like the consequences. Sometimes children must follow directions, even when there is no obvious or desirable payoff. "Why should I pick up my dirty clothes? I don't care if the bathroom is neat and clean." In those cases, provide a desirable outcome. Match a desired consequence with a task that the child is not as willing to do.

Doing chores: Say, "If you want to watch the Smurfs on TV, you'll need to put away your toys first."

Doing chores when a friend is visiting: Say, "First clean up your room and then you can each have a glass of juice."

Make a chart: For an older child, make a chart of jobs. A predetermined number of checks equals a desired reward.

Be sure to emphasize the directions the child is following and use praise as well as concrete rewards.

Strategy 11. Give choices.

Children are more motivated to complete tasks and follow directions if they feel they have some say in the matter. Let your child choose which household jobs he or she wants to do. Give only options that are acceptable to you. Your child gets to make a choice, and you are happy with either choice. You can also give choices about some time schedules. Again, both schedules should be acceptable to you.

Cleaning the room: Say, "It's time to clean your room. You may pick up the toys, or vacuum and dust. Which would you like to do?"

Doing homework: Explain, "You may do your picture first and then your letters, or you may do your letters first and then your picture."

While shopping: "You must stay beside me in the mall. You may do that by yourself or you may hold my hand."

ACTIVITY

Name two choices that you have given your child this week.

1. _____

2. _____

Name one more choice that you will give your child today.

1. _____

Strategy 12. Make a game of the situation.

Children love games. They like for things to be fun. Making games out of undesirable tasks makes a child happy and more likely to perform the task, which in turn makes you happy that the task is done. If at all possible, make less desirable jobs fun. Reinforce the child often and generously for jobs done and directions followed.

Doing chores: Say, "It's time to clean up your room. Let's see if you can put all your toys away before the timer goes off."

Doing chores: Say, "It's time to clean up your room. First put away all the cars and trucks, then put away all the things you build with, then put away all the things you eat with."

Doing chores with a sibling or when a friend is visiting: Say, "Let's make an assembly line. You hand the blocks to Jeff and he can put them on the shelf."

Doing chores with a sibling or when a friend is visiting: Say, "Let's have a race. Let's see who can make the biggest stack of blocks against the wall."

Doing chores with a sibling or when a friend is visiting: Say, "Jeff, you get all the cardboard blocks and put them away, and John, you get all the wooden blocks."

Summary

Twelve strategies for teaching following directions were discussed. Strategies 1-7 were concerned with the child's ability to follow directions. Strategies 8-12 were concerned with the child's willingness to follow directions. To review, the strategies were:

1) Have your child's attention
2) Make directions concrete and precise
3) Have your child repeat the directions to you
4) Give only a few steps at a time
5) Post reminders for everyday jobs
6) Play "listening-and-following-directions" games
7) Rehearse new or unfamiliar directions
8) Explain the importance of following directions
9) Make directions meaningful
10) Follow a less-desired behavior with more-desired behavior
11) Give choices
12) Make a game of the situation

Remember to give more attention to directions that your child remembers and follows. Praise the steps your child does follow. Do not give all your attention to the one or two steps not followed. Keep directions meaningful and developmentally appropriate.

Chapter 10

Waiting Patiently

CHAPTER 10

WAITING PATIENTLY

The basic problem with teaching a child to wait is that no one likes to do this. There's no value in spending one's time waiting around, and yet it's something we all spend more or less time doing. The best way to teach a child to wait is to figure out what goes into making waiting easier. To increase waiting time, therefore, make the waiting period as easy as possible for the child and then reward the waiting behavior.

Early psychologists explained that reminding a person about the thing she is waiting for would help the person to wait longer and easier. If this were true, then constantly reminding the child of whatever she is waiting for would help the time go faster. Not so. Modern psychology has done a large amount of research on what helps people to wait, or to delay in getting their needs met. The overwhelming conclusion is that constantly reminding anyone of what they should or must wait for makes the waiting very much harder.

What helps the child delay or wait? Distraction is the very best way of helping ourselves to wait. The children in the delay studies who waited the longest did everything they could to keep from thinking too much about the reward. They sang and talked to themselves and did whatever else they could find to do.

This is most effective if some planning goes into it. Think ahead about the day's activities and try to determine when your child might have to wait. Plan your distractions and have available the desired items to help distract the child. If you're caught in an unexpected situation, make up a game to help the child think about something else.

Keep two things in mind in addition to planning your distractors. First, your child is going to want confirmation about the item or event for which she is waiting. "When's my birthday? When is grandma coming? What day does nursery school start?" The best way to help a child who has trouble waiting is not to focus in detail on all the lovely things that are going to happen. That will make it so much harder to wait. Try using symbols to help the child feel the passage of time and to confirm that the time is passing.

Second, a young child's time perspective is very different from yours. Keep the waiting periods as short as possible. No child in the studies mentioned above waited longer than 20 minutes to get her reward. Try not to keep your child in an intense waiting situation for longer than 10 minutes without some very specific plans to make the waiting easier.

Waiting times can be made easier for the parent and the child with insight and effort based on the child's needs. In fact, waiting might even be fun, enlightening, and a time to be spontaneously imaginative with your child.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Record whether the child waited patiently.	Refer to pages 11-12 to measure the child's behavior in intervals. Use interval record Form 4. Define what you mean by "patiently." Every 5 minutes, put a + if he waits patiently, and an 0 if he does not.
Time how long the child waits before becoming impatient.	Whenever you are out and the child needs to wait (at the Dr.'s office, etc.), time how many minutes the child plays quietly with a toy. Use Form 3 to record the number of minutes.
Describe the child's waiting behavior.	For 5 minutes, while you are waiting with the child, write down everything he does. Use Form 5.

Strategies For Teaching Your Child To Wait Patiently

Strategy 1. Prepare the child.

If you anticipate a waiting period, tell the child, "We are going to the dentist. We might have to wait our turn." Have the child choose something to take along to do while waiting. This gives the child some sense of control over how his time passes. He may not be able to avoid waiting, but he can decide how to spend his time while waiting.

Visit to the doctor: "We're going to the doctor. We'll have to wait but I don't know how long. Decide what book (toy) you want to bring with you so that you have something to do while you're waiting."

Travel in the car: "We are going to grandmother's house. The trip will take one hour. Find a toy to play with in the car."

Strategy 2. Plan time fillers.

Children wait best if they are distracted. If a wait is anticipated the parent can plan time fillers. Small toys or games that can easily fit into a small bag are good. Many games come in small versions or come with magnetic pieces for travel. Make a travel bag out of a small canvas bag and fill it with games, paper, crayons, and books. If the child is older, he or she can help determine what goes in the bag. Remember, though, that children do not have a good sense of time and will probably need assistance in packing the right things that will occupy enough time.

Sometimes you are caught in a situation with waiting time and no materials available. Plan some simple word games that do not require materials. The best idea is to write down suggestions you like on an index card or piece of paper and put it in your purse or the glove compartment of the car. When you need it most is when you won't be able to think of one song or game.

So often, parents and children are all very busy and find it difficult to spend time together just talking. Take advantage of time together, when you both are not going in different directions. Talk about the child's favorite subject or make up stories together. One subject filler parents often forget about is themselves ("When I was three and Aunt Kate was a little tiny baby, Grandpa ...") and their child. Tell stories about each other. Keep pictures in your wallet as prompts. With a little imagination, wait times can become fun, sharing times.

At the doctor's office: Tell stories about past vacations. "When you were four, do you remember when we went camping and you thought you saw...."

While traveling in car: The ABC game. Find the letters of the alphabet on signs along the road. Letters must be found in order and turns are alternated between people in the car. To make the game more complex for older children, they must find a word that begins with each letter.

When caught in traffic jam: Play I Spy. "I spy something; it is red." The other person must guess what it is and then have a turn. "I spy something which people eat." To get the most benefit from this game and to be creative, vary the items by form ("square") and function ("can make music").

At the doctor's office: Play the Word Category game. Pick a category, such as animals. The first person names one. The next person must name one that begins with the sound that the previous one ended with. For example: "Dog, Goat, Tiger, Rabbit." Other categories are: Toys, Foods or School Supplies. For younger children, just have them think of examples that fit in the category. For example, "Let's name all the toys we can think of."

While waiting in the grocery checkout line: Play a number game. Think of a number from 1-10 (50, 100, etc). The other person guesses and the first person says higher, or lower. The game continues until the number is guessed.

While in the car: If noise is not a major factor, sing songs. Sing nursery rhymes, school songs, or any song you both know.

ACTIVITY

Write down three activities you are going to use to make waiting more fun.

1. For waiting in the car I will _____

_____

For this I need _____

_____

2. For waiting in line I will _____

_____

For this I need _____

_____

3. For waiting at _____ I will suggest

_____

For this I will need _____

_____

Strategy 3. Make time more concrete.

Children have difficulty waiting because they have little understanding about the passage of time. There are ways of structuring the time so that children have a more concrete way to understand how long they will have to wait. Use concrete aids to give a visual representation of time. The following are several suggestions with examples of how to use each.

A. A kitchen timer is one way for a child to "see" time. The timer lets the child know how much time he needs to wait before the desired activity.

The parent cannot attend to the child because he/she is on the telephone, visiting with a friend, paying attention to a sibling, etc. In these situations, the timer will let the child know how much time has to pass before the parent will attend to them. The parent can use either a kitchen timer or an hourglass (sand timer). The parent can say, "I'm talking with Janice now. I'll be finished in 5 minutes;then I can talk to you. Let's set the timer so you know how long 5 minutes is. When the timer goes off, I'll be able to talk to you."

The child is ready to eat and dinner is not ready: "Dinner will be ready in 10 minutes. I'll set the timer. You go and play with your toys and when the bell rings it will be dinner time."

Parent comes home from work and wants to relax before paying attention to the child: "Mommy needs to rest for 15 minutes. I'll set the timer. When the bell rings, I will be ready to talk to you. You can watch TV or play until the timer goes off."

B. A clock with movable hands is another example of a concrete aid. The clock can be made from a paper plate and popsicle sticks. The play clock can be set to show the child what the clock will look like when it's time to do an activity.

When the child wants to go somewhere: "We are leaving at 5 o'clock. The big hand will be on the 12 and the little hand will be on the 5. Then we will leave. Why don't you read a book until then."

The child is waiting for Dad to come home: "Dad will be home at 6 o'clock. The big hand will be on the 12 and the little hand will be on the 6. Then it will be 6 o'clock.Would you like to help me set the table as we wait? You can check the clock after awhile to see if it matches our clock."

C. Make a paper chain for long-term waiting. Make one link represent each day. The last link represents the waited-for event.

The child is ready for Christmas. "We have 10 days until Christmas. This chain has 10 links. We'll cut one off each day. When we reach the gold link it will be Christmas Day."

The child is preparing for a trip to grandparents: "We are going to see Grandmother and Grandfather this weekend. We have 5 days before we go. This chain tells us how many days. We will take one off each day."

D. Make a calendar to mark the passage of time. Have the child mark off the days, or draw a picture in the square about the day's activities.

The child is preparing for grandparents' visit: Make a visual diary calendar. Five days before they arrive, have the child draw or write what happened on that day in the first of five boxes. The next day is the next box, etc. "When Grandpa arrives we'll have all the boxes filled in and lots to talk about to him." This also focuses on the pleasures of the present and minimizes the pressures of waiting.

For Vacation: Use a calendar to make the time before vacation more concrete. On each day on the calendar have the child write one thing he will need to pack.

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat

E. Place strips of adhesive tape on the refrigerator to represent days. On each strip, write an activity for the day.

Holiday season: Strip 1: Color holiday pictures. Strip 2: Hang stockings. Strip 3: Decorate tree. Strip 4: Hang wreath.

F. Describe the passage of time in terms of events or landmarks.

When riding in the car: The parent can discuss landmarks with the child. "First we have to go by the Giant supermarket, then we have to drive up this long hill, then we have to go through three stop lights, then we'll be at school." Have the child remember and name the landmarks as one way to keep him occupied and make the wait easier.

Shopping at the grocery store: "Here's what we have to shop for: First we'll be getting vegetables, then we have to buy meat, then we get cat food for Ernie, then we buy soap, and last we get milk. Then we wait in line at the

check-out counter, then we're done." As you get an activity accomplished, state that, "Whew, that's done, now what do we get next?"

In a restaurant: "First the waitress comes to take our order. Then we wait while the cook (chef) is making our food. Then we eat our salad, then we eat our meat, vegetables and potato, then we eat dessert, then we pay for our meal. Then we go home."

ACTIVITY

List three strategies you've tried that you never tried before to make time more understandable to your child:

1. (Strategy) _____

   (Outcome) _____

2. (Strategy) _____

   (Outcome) _____

3. (Strategy) _____

   (Outcome) _____

Strategy 4. Tell the child the behavior you want.

Be specific about the behaviors you want and don't want. Different waiting behaviors are needed when you wait in a doctor's office than when you wait for a sermon to be finished at church. Define what the child may do very specifically.

While waiting in church: (or someplace where the child must be quiet) "You will have to wait until the preacher finishes talking and we read a book or color quietly. You must be quiet and you must stay in your seat."

While waiting for Mom to finish a telephone conversation: "This call is important. I will be done in 10 minutes. I'll set the timer. You may play with your toys. You may not interrupt. I'll talk to you when I'm finished."

Summary

Four strategies for teaching children to wait were discussed. To review, they were:

1) Prepare the child
2) Plan time fillers
3) Make time concrete by use of
    a) Timer
    b) Play clock
    c) Paper chain
    d) Calendar
    e) Strips of tape
    f) Verbal descriptions
4) Describe the behaviors you want

Waiting is a difficult behavior to learn. Children do not understand time. They have short attention spans. If at all possible, reduce your expectations and reduce your child's waiting times. You know your child best. You know which situations are most difficult. For example, don't expect the child to wait patiently in the grocery line just before dinner when he is hungry. Acknowledge your child's feelings and accomplishments. Let him know when he was able to wait patiently.

Chapter 11

Taking Turns Talking

CHAPTER 11

TAKING TURNS TALKING

Conversational rules are hard to follow all the time. Everyone has trouble with them some of the time. We all know people who think no one else has anything to say which is as important, witty, or entertaining as what they have to say. Even the politest of people break the conversation rules when they are excited or upset. The implication of this is that we shouldn't judge young children too harshly if they have some difficulty allowing others a fair share of the conversation. However, if children are having a very hard time dealing with conversational norms, we can help them learn some rules and we can reward them for being good talking partners.

Many children learn to take turns in conversations as babies. We can see dads and infants babbling to each other: Daddy "talks" while baby listens and watches him closely, then baby "talks" while Daddy listens, smiling and nodding. This is what Brazelton has termed "reciprocity." It is likely that this early turn-taking leads to the ability to take turns in conversation as the child grows. Some infants may not have the temperament or the attention to become engaged in this give-and-take. These children can be helped to practice turn-taking in conversation when it is developmentally appropriate for them.

Before children can consciously take part in conversations they must have the desire and capability to share. Children under the age of three are rarely interested in sharing. Preschool children can share for short periods if they are rewarded for it; e.g., Amelia's friend looks excited and happy when Amelia shares a toy with her; Grandfather proudly tells Jericho's dad how Jericho shared his kite with his sister, while Jericho is listening; and Armando realizes that if he shares his Stegosaurus with Jenny then Jenny is a lot more likely to share her Tyrannosaurus Rex with him. Being willing and able to share is a prerequisite to conversational give-and-take.

Conversation requires a special kind of knowing about people. Part of this knowledge is an awareness of the fact that other people have different thoughts, feelings, and needs than the child has. For example, if you ask four-year-old Miguel if his mom would rather have a bottle of perfume or a red wagon for her birthday, he is likely to choose the red wagon. Preschoolers have trouble taking the "role" of others. When the child continues to chat on and on, without listening, she may well think that everyone is as interested as she is in what she had for snack today.

Another problem frequently encountered is interrupting others. Although this is a common problem for all of us, it is even more apparent in young children. The child, impatient to discuss a new revelation, might feel she has waited absolutely forever for her chance to talk. Finally, she just blurts out her story and may, at that point, be completely unaware that another is speaking. Using cues, pointing out when she interrupts, and using reinforcement can alter this behavior.

Over time and with experience she can learn that others have different thoughts and needs than she does, and with this new learning can come courtesy.

The last aspect of people-knowing that we will talk about here is cues. Adults can tell that someone wants to talk because of the look on the other person's face or clues such as clearing the throat, etc. These are so subtle that young children might not see or pay attention to them. Sometimes even if the child is aware of the behavior, the preschooler doesn't know what the signal means. We can help children react more appropriately in conversations if we conscientiously make the cues known to the child. It might be necessary originally to substitute some very clear cues for taking turns until the child can interpret the more subtle adult cues.

Observing and Measuring Behavior

In order to help you evaluate whether or not the strategies you try work with your child, measure the behavior now and continue while you apply the strategies that follow. Review Chapter 2 on measurement, and then choose one or more of the following techniques to make a behavior record.

What You Do	How You Do It
Count how many times the child interrupts someone in conversation.	Keep a number of paper clips in your pocket. When the child interrupts a conversation, remove a paper clip from your pocket, and place it on your belt or waist band. Count all afternoon (or all morning). At the end of the afternoon, count the paper clips on your belt and record this number on Form 1.
Time how long your child talks without pausing for another person to speak.	Begin timing when the child starts to speak. Record the number of seconds he talked on Form 3.
Describe the environment when the child talked.	Notice and describe who talked to whom, the subjects, your child's response, and the other person's. Use Form 5.
Count the blocks of time in which the child did not interrupt conversations.	Designate one period per day to observe. Divide this time into 5-minute blocks. At the end of each 5-minute block, record a "+" if the child did not interrupt and a "o" if he did. Use Form 4.

Strategies For Teaching Your Child To Take Turns In Conversation

Strategy 1. Tell the child the behavior you want.

In order for a child to learn a skill, he needs to know what is expected. In other words, what exactly does "taking turns" mean? One way to define turn-taking is simply telling the child, "Taking turns means that you talk, then I talk, then you talk again. When you talk, I listen. When I talk, you listen." Definitions need to be concrete. You should also be clear about the behaviors that you do not want. "If I am talking, you should not start talking at the same time. You must wait until I stop talking. I should not talk while you are talking either." Reread pages 22-23 for a review of requesting the desired behavior.

Strategy 2. Discuss the importance of taking turns talking.

Children may find it easier to take turns talking if they understand why it is important. They need to understand how someone feels when they talk and people listen. The conversation could go something like this: "I like it when I get to tell about something I did. I'll bet you feel good when you get to tell about your day, don't you? I'll bet other people feel good when they get a chance to talk. What could we do so others can have a turn also?" "Right! We can take turns talking. First you talk and I listen. Then I talk and you listen. If I talk about what I did over the weekend, then I should give you a turn to tell me what you did. Then we would both feel happy because we would both have a turn." Any time the child successfully gives another person a turn, reinforce him or her. "I like the way you listened to Bill. That made him feel good."

At mealtimes: Give each person an opportunity to tell one thing about their day. Say "I'll bet John was happy he got a chance to tell about his field trip at school." You might talk about how you feel inside. "I wouldn't have known that there is an elephant at that zoo if I hadn't listened when John had his turn."

In play with peers: Have the children each tell about their toy. Say, "Everyone had a turn to talk. How did you feel when you told about your truck?"

When one child monopolizes the conversation: "Sue felt sad because she didn't get a chance to talk. Let's all listen and give Sue a turn to tell about her book."

Strategy 3. Practice with the child.

Children learn by doing, and by observing how others respond to their actions. We need to talk about turn-taking, and we need to talk about why it is important. But most important

of all, we need to set up situations where children can practice turn-taking, and reinforce them for succeeding. Practice should be fun. Practice should be structured so the child can succeed. If waiting for a turn to talk is very difficult, make the wait short. Use direct instructions, such as "Now it's my turn to talk." Reinforce the child when she takes turns.

At bedtime: If the child can read, take turns reading parts of a story. You read a sentence (or page) and she reads a sentence (or page).

At bedtime: If the child cannot read, take turns telling a story. Start the story and pause and let the next person add to the story. Have that person pause and let someone else continue.

At mealtimes: Give everyone a chance to tell about their favorite activity of the day. If the child does not naturally pause to allow someone else to speak say, "Now, it's your sister's turn to tell about her favorite activity."

Strategy 4. Use a preset cue for turn-taking.

On pages 19-25 there was a discussion about antecedents. Cues are one form of antecedents. It would be helpful for you to review those pages at this time. If a child is having difficulty taking turns talking, he or she is probably not reading subtle cues that people use when it is their turn to speak. In practice, set up a predetermined cue that is easy for the child to read. One such cue might be a verbal statement, "It's my turn to talk." Another cue might be to gently hold your hand up (as a policeman signaling stop). The child would need to be told, "When I hold my hand up it means to give me (or the other person) a chance to talk." Another subtle interruption may be to gently touch the child on the arm. Again explain to the child beforehand, "When I touch you, you need let the other child speak." It may also be helpful to establish a preset cue for the times when the child interrupts or does not let another finish talking. Explain to the child, "When I say 'wait' that means you need to let the other person finish speaking."

Establishing cues ahead of time for when it is someone else's turn and for when the child is interrupting will help you be able to signal the child quickly without interrupting the flow of the conversation.

It is important to let the child know how well he is doing. When you notice he was able to take a turn, tell him so. When he lets another speak without interrupting, tell him how well he did.

In play with peers: If the child is talking without allowing for turn-taking, come up and put your hand on his shoulder, as he pauses to see who it is, say to the other child, "Mary, how did you like the TV show last night?"

At mealtime: As each person talks use the cue, "It's Dad's turn to talk." If the child interrupts say, "Wait until he is finished."

At bathtime: Play a game with the preset cues. Have the child talk about a favorite topic. Say "When I hold up my hand I want you to stop talking and I'll say something. Watch carefully! Can you stop talking each time I give the signal? Or can I trick you?"

Strategy 5. Teach the child to look for cues about when it's his or her turn.

There are certain cues that adults use to determine when to talk. Among them are: a) when there's a pause in the conversation, b) when the speaker switches eye contact away from the person they were talking to, or c) when the speaker looks at the child. These cues are usually subtle and happen very fast. It may be difficult for the child who is already experiencing difficulties with turn-taking to note these cues. Even though it may be difficult, the child should be taught what the cues are and given much experience. Point out the cues. Call the child's attention to others reading the cues. "Did you notice how she paused and took a breath and then he began to talk?" For the very young child, just exposure to the fact that these cues exist may be enough to expect. As the child gets older, he may be expected to begin to note and use some of these natural cues. Exaggerate some of the natural cues in your conversation with the child as you use the preset cues discussed earlier.

Watching TV: Point out how the actors look at one another to signal someone's turn to talk. If available, use a VCR to stop the movie and point out what is happening. This can even be done with cartoons or Sesame Street. Ernie and Bert spend much time in back-and-forth conversation.

At mealtime: Be sure to give eye contact when it is the child's turn to talk. Turn your head and look at the child and say, "What was your favorite part of the day?"

Story-telling: Tell add-on stories. Instead of saying "It's your turn," pause and give eye contact to let the child know it's his turn. If he doesn't respond, remind him: "When I stop and look at you, it's your turn." Have him use the same cues to have you or a sibling continue the story.

Strategy 6. Teach the child how to look for cues that it's someone else's turn.

When children talk, it's hard for them to recognize that someone is giving cues that he wants a turn to speak. These cues may include: a) looking away from the speaker, b) opening his mouth as if to speak, and c) losing interest in what the speaker is saying. Again, these cues are very subtle and happen very fast. The young child will probably not be aware of these and will have a difficult time reading and responding to those cues. Explain the cues to the

child and point out when they are being used. Watch the child in play with peers. When he begins to monopolize the conversation, say, "Look, John seems to want to speak now. He started looking around the room."

At playtime: Spend some time near the child and his friend, so you can point out cues. "I like hearing about your new bike. Mary seems excited. Do you think she would like to tell about a new toy she has?"

Role playing: "Let's pretend two children are playing and one is talking and won't give the other a turn to speak. How can the second child let the first one know she wants a turn?"

Strategy 7. Observe others in conversation.

Conversations occur all around the child in most situations. Use these opportunities to illustrate the point that people talk back and forth. The cashier talks to the customer. The boss talks to the employees.

Playtime: Play spy or detective and tape a conversation without the people knowing. Play it back. Say "Listen, they both take turns talking." Guess, by voice sound, whose turn it is.

Watching TV: Play a game and turn the sound down. Watch the people. Say "Let's see if we can tell whose turn it is. Look! I see his mouth moving. He looked at her. Oh! Now her mouth is moving, it's her turn," etc.

Animal sounds: Go out at night and listen to the bugs call out back and forth to each other. "Listen to the cricket over there. Now another one is answering him back."

ACTIVITY

Think of three ways you helped your child to see and interpret conversational turn-taking:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Strategies 8. Emphasize turn-taking in general.

Turn-taking is a skill that can be worked on without conversations. Children like to be heard, they like to get attention, and they like to have a turn. The more a skill can be practiced in a variety of ways, the more it is likely to be learned.

Use lots of praise and smiles when the child can recognize turn-taking or correctly identify who is having a turn. When a child can recognize turn-taking in a variety of situations, then you can feel confident that he understands the concept. One note of caution: it is far easier for a child to recognize turns than for him to actually take turns. This means, for your young child, he may easily be able to tell you whose turn it is with the ball, while he may not be able to easily take turns with a peer while playing ball.

Any activity that requires the cooperation of two people can be used to stress the definition of turn-taking.

At mealtime: As food is served say "It's my turn to get potatoes. Now it's Dad's turn."

At bathtime: Say, "You and your sister need a bath. You take a turn in the tub and then she will take a turn."

In the car: While sitting at a traffic light ask, "Whose turn is it to go? Look, those cars are going! It's their turn." As your light is green, say, "It's our turn to go now."

Play simple games, such as lotto, that require turn-taking.

In the car: Sing songs that require turn-taking, such as "There's a Hole in the Bucket," "Three Blind Mice," and "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," or sing other familiar songs and alternate lines or verses.

Role play: Have the child role play a conversation between two dolls about the child's favorite topic.

ACTIVITY

Choose two activities to encourage turn-taking.
Complete this table. *Who* played *what* to encourage turn-taking?

	Who	What
1.		
2.		

Strategy 9. Provide times for the child to get undivided attention.

Children like to talk and have an audience. They need times when they can have your undivided attention. This may help the child at other times when she is required to share the conversation with others. If possible, be alone with the child. Look at the child, and give eye contact. Let her talk about anything she wishes.

Sometimes it's very difficult to find free time just to listen to a child. Use natural opportunities when you are alone with the child to give the child this attention.

Tell the child, "Now it's your turn to talk all alone." It is especially important to give the child this direct verbal cue, if you have been prompting her to take turns in other conversations. This way, she may not get as confused about when she needs to take turns.

In the car: When you are going some place with just that child, allow the child to make up a story about her favorite character.

At bathtime: As you bathe the child, let her tell you uninterruptedly about her day.

When you go shopping: Take just that child. Let her talk all she wishes about what she sees in the store. "Just the two of us are shopping. Today you can talk all you wish."

Strategy 10. Provide an acceptable means of interrupting to get a turn.

Sometimes it's important for a child to have an acceptable way to say something to a person who is talking to someone else. You might teach the child to say "Can I talk to you for a minute?" or "Excuse me." It is good for the child to have an acceptable strategy to

politely interrupt. As is normal with any newly acquired skill, the child may overuse the strategy. If so, stress that turn-taking may require him to wait for his turn to speak.

When company is visiting : The child says, "I need to talk to you for a minute. May I go to the park with Sam? They are leaving now." This is acceptable because the child needs an immediate answer.

When company is visiting: When the child continually interrupts by saying, "Excuse me," say, "Thank you for politely interrupting, but this is my turn to talk to Mrs. Smith now. Wait until we're done and then it will be your turn to talk." Or, "I'm talking to Mrs. Smith now. When I go into the kitchen to get our coffee, you'll have a chance to talk to her."

Summary

Ten strategies for teaching conversational turn-taking were discussed that will teach and reinforce the developmental skills and conversation rules that are generally accepted in our society. While there may be differences in families, cultures, and ethnic groups, these suggestions will provide a general guideline for helping parents teach their children conversation skills. To review, the strategies presented were:

1) Tell the child the behavior you want
2) Discuss the importance of taking turns talking
3) Practice with the child
4) Use preset cues
5) Teach child to read cues when it's his or her turn
6) Teach child to read cues when others want turns
7) Observe others in conversations
8) Emphasize turn-taking in general
9) Provide time for undivided attention
10) Provide acceptable means to interrupt

Remember, language is fun. It's the way we communicate and relate to each other. It is important to be positive and emphasize what the child is doing right. At the end of a conversation, tell him he took turns well, if he did. Show him what he did that was effective. Have fun talking with and listening to your child.

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Appendix

Form 1
Behavior Chart

Which exact behavior are you observing? _____

When are you observing it? _____all day _____minutes per day

from _____to_____

Are you charting _____how often it occurs? Or _____how long it lasts?

Week Write in Date	Days							Average for Week
	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								
Week 5								

From: *Behavior Problems* (Baker, Brightman, Heifetz & Murphy, 1976)

Form 2
Frequency Record

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
15	15	15	15	15	15	15
14	14	14	14	14	14	14
13	13	13	13	13	13	13
12	12	12	12	12	12	12
11	11	11	11	11	11	11
10	10	10	10	10	10	10
9	9	9	9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8	8	8	8
7	7	7	7	7	7	7
6	6	6	6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1	1	1	1	1	1	1
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Key: X = Behavior Performed

O = Behavior Not Performed

Dates:_____

Behavior I am observing_____

Form 3
Duration Record

Behavior:_____

Observed By:_____

Time			Total Minutes	Comments
Date	Begin	End		

Form 4
Interval Observation Record

Behavior:_____

Observed By:_____

Time			Occurrence of behavior Each block (interval) stands for_____minute(s)
Date	Begin	End	

+ = 0 =

Form 5
Anecdotal Record

Date: _____
Day of Week Date

Time: _____
Begin End

Observed By: _____

Behavior description: (include who was present, what activities were occurring as you began to watch, and what was said and done).